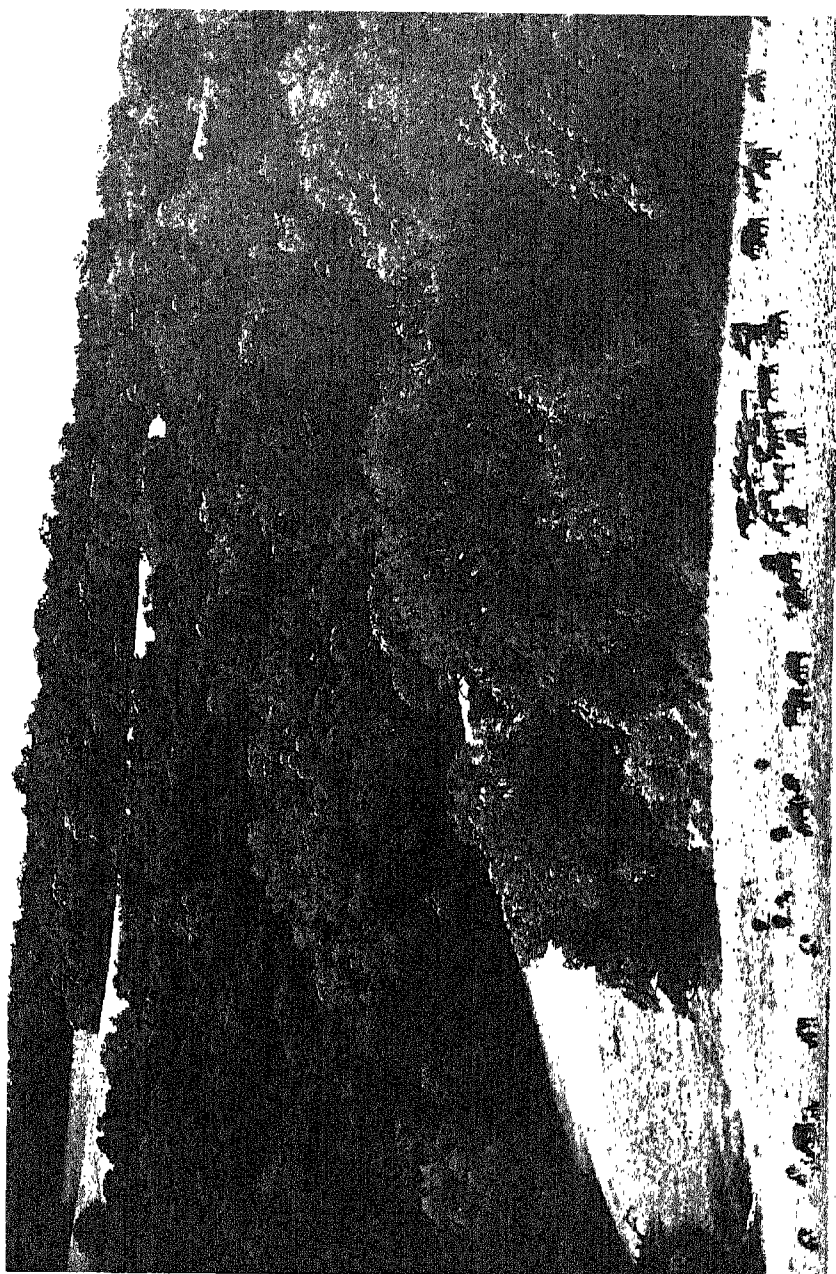


DIMBILIL

The Story of a Kenya Farm



GLADES AND HANGING FOREST

DIMBILIL

The story of a Kenya Farm

ERROL WHITTALL



ARTHUR BARKER
London

First published in Great Britain 1956

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED, LONDON AND EDINBURGH

THE AFRICAN PROBLEM

"The position of agriculture in Africa is critical in so far as the old methods no longer suffice, and if new methods are brought in on commercial lines of exploitation, the result can only be disastrous to vast communities. We are face to face with the fact that British occupation of Africa has resulted in a check to tribal warfare and the control of some at least of the diseases that killed man and beast and kept the population in check. Peace and progress have increased population and protected wild life. Side by side with these advantages we have seen great deforestation and the grasslands have been over-grazed. Erosion is one of the worst results, and another problem that has arisen is that of maintenance, because the old agricultural practices, sufficient when the populations were small and shifting, became inadequate when, as the population grows and settles, the available areas of cultivation tended to shrink. . . . Qualified observers have noticed persistently that native agricultural practice tends to conserve soil-values, and that while native pride in the possession of cattle has led to great over-stocking and unnecessary destruction of forests and vegetation, the larger destruction and consequent erosion are mainly due to the incursion of the European and his new practices. . . . The problems of Africa that may still be solved by encouraging sane methods of husbandry and refusing firmly to allow commercial practices imported from our country are many and serious."

The Labouring Earth, by C. Baker.

FOREWORD

I OWE this record to the land on which I have the good fortune to make my living. Ours has been a quest which has brought us some measure of happiness, and in this book I hope to convey something of the interest and beauty of a Kenya farm in the making. I have never tried to master Africa because I have always known that in the end this land will take possession once again: that Nature only waits to reclaim our clearings with regenerated forest and bush. Abuse the land, and desert creeps down from the North; till the land, and in a generation its fertility has vanished. I therefore have not listened to the modern insistence on fullest development, because I know that there lies damnation. Had it been otherwise Africa would, after thousands of years, have been as populated as Asia, and we can but admit that in this continent Nature dominates Man so that no true civilisation has emerged, and it has recently been proved that even with modern methods and power, grandiose schemes and human greed end in disaster. As I see it, I am but a tenant for the span of my life and I have no wish to rob the land, strip the forests, and sell fertility to the towns. Sufficient that I can live adequately and hand on a heritage to my children, and this story only aims at telling those who will follow how we fared on the land, and should this great Mau forest be swept away by the rising tide of African peoples, then the illustrations will preserve something of the beauty of these forested hills.

Some might ask why these great forest lands should be despoiled, and the answer is not far to seek, though many are at pains to hide the true facts which are now forcing the pace of Africa. From the Nile to the Limpopo, forces are at work

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

which must inevitably lead to an upsurge of nationalism among the African people. This rising consciousness will be a blind and ruthless rebellion against European domination, and the end will not greatly differ from the fate which has overtaken so many past civilisations, both in the Near East, in the Euphrates Valley, the Gobi Desert, and farther.

It has recently been stated that where farming has become progressive there have followed desert conditions, and even in recent times we have evidence of this in the Middle West of America where millions of acres of once forest land are now but a dust bowl. Excavations in Iraq have shown, and scientists are at pains to prove, that the Great Flood of Biblical times was simply the effect of clearing the forests of the Elamite hinterland of the Sumerian city states and the exposure of steep hillsides to erosion much in the same way as is taking place here in Kenya today. Primitive agriculture, which by its very nature conserves the soil structure, turns to widespread exploitation so soon as the population increases through any one cause. Africa has remained static by reason of epidemics of human and stock diseases, but since the advent of medicine, the rise of both man and beast has been phenomenal. Increased population requires that each generation subdivides the existing land, for the time comes when they can no longer set out for pastures new, and even the steepest hillsides must be dug to provide sufficient food. Under natural conditions the cultivator moved on as fertility fell, for there was room for all when rinderpest, sleepy sickness, deficiency diseases, and even smallpox reduced the human and animal population. Almost overnight, in timeless Africa, the European removed these killing agencies, and with the rise in birth- and survival-rate the land, unable to support the increased demands on its fertility and on its carrying capacity, declined in geometric progression. This factor, I know well, is appreciated by modern science, but as yet there has not been evolved so simple an antidote to these evils as a means of birth control which

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

would be accepted and practised by primitive peoples. After thousands of years of human wastage, especially in infancy, the African has come to regard children as the one blessing which will perpetuate his ego and ensure his life after death. Add to this the belief that life is utterly extinguished unless offspring survive, and you have a barrier against any form of restriction on the birth-rate. The old method of placing children in the open overnight when they were suffering from teething convulsions led to enormous death-rates, especially among the Kikuyu, and this had a great influence on keeping the tribe within limits, but with the advent of doctors, the Kikuyu were quick to learn, and quick to change their old habits, largely through their closer contact with civilisation. Add to this the fact that grain-eaters are more prolific breeders than blood- and milk-eaters, such as the Hamites, and you have all the conditions necessary for a rise in population. In the old days the marauding Masai created conditions amongst the Kikuyu amounting to extermination in certain locations, and records are full of the massacres of the Kikuyu and the Kamba by these warriors, but other factors entered into the keeping down of numbers, as I have pointed out above, though from the time of the arrival of Europeans the Kikuyu and the Kamba began the process of land hunger which has led in the one case to open rebellion, and in the other, the change from a highly fertile country to what may be now described as a desert, in a matter of fifty years.

The Kikuyu country was once forested, but is now denuded of trees. In spite of the efforts of agricultural officers, often in the teeth of bitter opposition from the people, a vast amount of work must be done if the area is to be saved from the same fate as the Kamba country. The rivers which flow to the Indian Ocean yearly carry away millions of tons of surface soil which stains the sea for many miles away from the coast-line. In the delta of the Tana River there are yearly great floods caused by the silting up of the channels, and as with the Euphrates,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

there will one day be a repetition of those conditions which submerged the Sumerian city states.

As I see it, there can be no escape from famine in East Africa at some future date. With the onset of erosion and of overstocking, the very conditions which modern science removed, will once more be made evident by the decline in nutrition and the appearance of deficiencies. I doubt if maize as a main diet can produce anything but lethargy, and if you add to this the intestinal parasites which afflict 95 per cent. of the population, the situation now would appear to have changed very little since early times. It is said that science will find a means of feeding the millions whose yearly increase is mounting (in spite of a denial by the Royal Commission), and that may well be so, but at present the claim cannot be substantiated, and the root of the whole matter is that until the African works harder he cannot live better. He will stand and pray to the new moon to give him sufficient food for the coming month, but at the same time he will allow his field fences to fall into disrepair so that stock and game can eat his crops : he will sell his harvest and keep insufficient food for his family and then starve for part of the year. To overcome these failings is of greater importance to his progress than to learn the three R's, but these things are forgotten in a democratic world which believes in letting people do what they please. The land is declining, and in face of that we are seeing the implementation of the Swynnerton Report. The main objective of this Report is to substitute subsistence farming with cash-crop farming. From this monocultural system there will emerge more loss of fertility, and also a dispossessed peasantry who will drift to the towns as landless paupers.

Reading the pages that follow you will note that the stress is laid upon the African. Civilisation and modern methods have shown and given great benefits and great improvements in living conditions for one small section of the population, and in agriculture there comes a time when we can push the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

African no further unless we can first teach him the reasons for improving his methods. Without that understanding and without that incentive the country's economics can be likened to a triangle with Efficiency at the apex, Wages at one base, and Profits at the other. Whilst E stays immobile, W tends to rise, and P steadily falls. This equation is bedevilling the future of Kenya and probably also of the whole of Africa. Nobody has found the key to the problem unless it be that a maize diet is incompatible with efficiency. If the wheaten loaf is the alternative, who is going to grow the wheat, and where are the wheatlands? Somebody will have to discover a method of making the desert to flower.

ERROL WHITTALL.

DIMBILIL FARM,
MOLO,
KENYA COLONY.

ILLUSTRATIONS

GLADES AND HANGING FOREST	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE MAU FOREST	PAGE 17
OLIVE FOREST	18
WATER CART	35
MEASURING MILK	36
KARAU GLADE	53
ROMNEY FLOCK ON THE BURNT HILLSIDE	54
OX PLOUGHING	71
DOROBO WOMAN	72
WATERING IN THE KIPSONOI	89
ARMED CATTLE-HERDS	90
OLD DOROBO	107
PYRETHRUM PICKERS	108
OUR FOREST HOME	125
KIPSIGIS GIRL	126
A CORNER OF THE GARDEN	143
ELEPHANT TUSK	144

1

"I too will something make
And joy in the making ;
Altho' tomorrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking."

ROBERT BRIDGES.

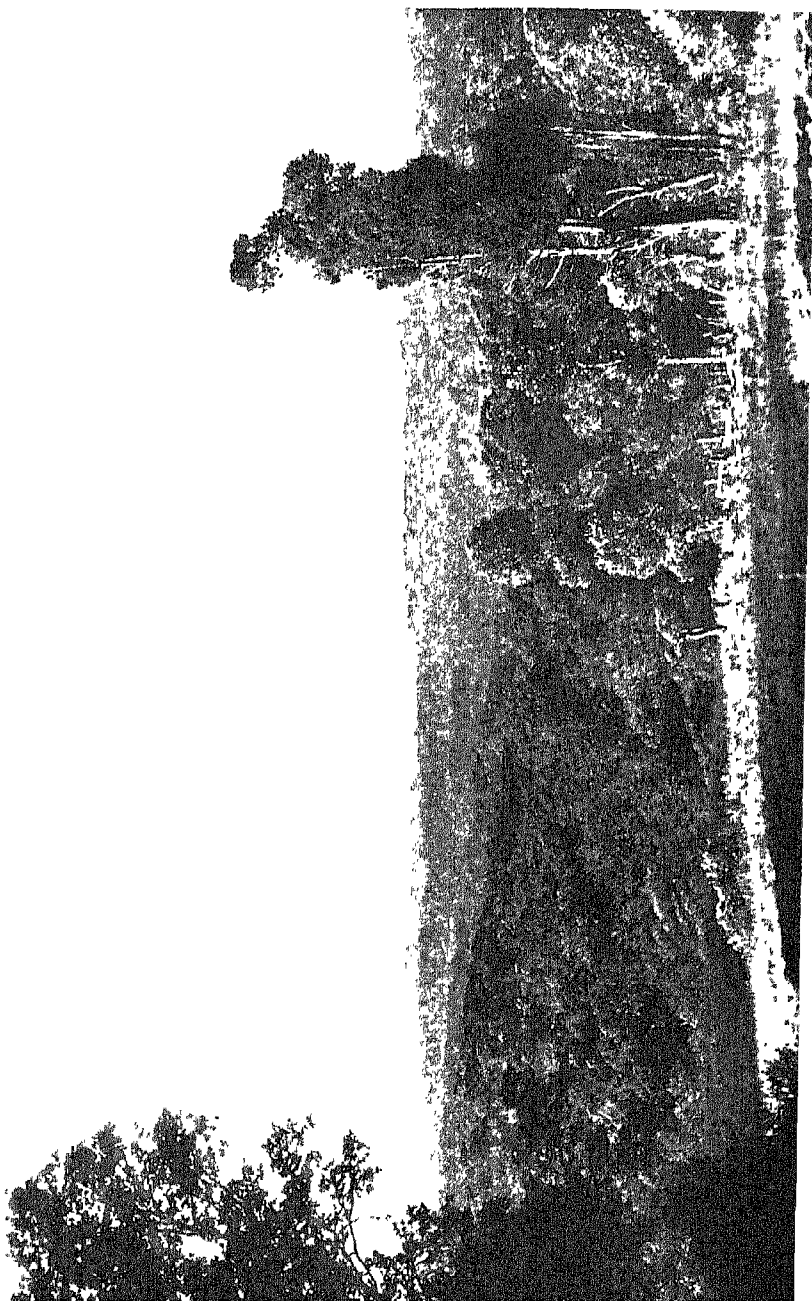
I RODE over the great expanse of grazing lands one early dawn to the forests far beyond the highveld of the Mau, and as the sun rose in all the loveliness of a September morning I looked down over the wooded ridges to the mists which almost shrouded the Kisii Mountains. The sunrays slanted with a golden light across the undulating hills, here in deep shadow, and far away, thirty miles down, the uncertain outlines of the bamboo quilt melted into the haze of the Serengeti Plains.

Africa never changes, and always there awaits the wanderer that which he has always known, and yet with each day there comes some new enchantment which grips the imagination with its visions of uncharted lands, of deep valleys untrodden through countless ages : vast plains with lakes and mountains, great herds of antelope and always near and far, the sky's unresting cloudland, sifting the sunlight across the hills and valleys with prinks of brilliant greens and distant blues, and all the while great galleons drift their shadows or cast their showers like giant brooms sweeping the horizon. Long ago I had fallen under this spell, and now after six years of absence I knew that I had returned for the last time, and I knew I should never again leave these "hills, whence cometh my help."

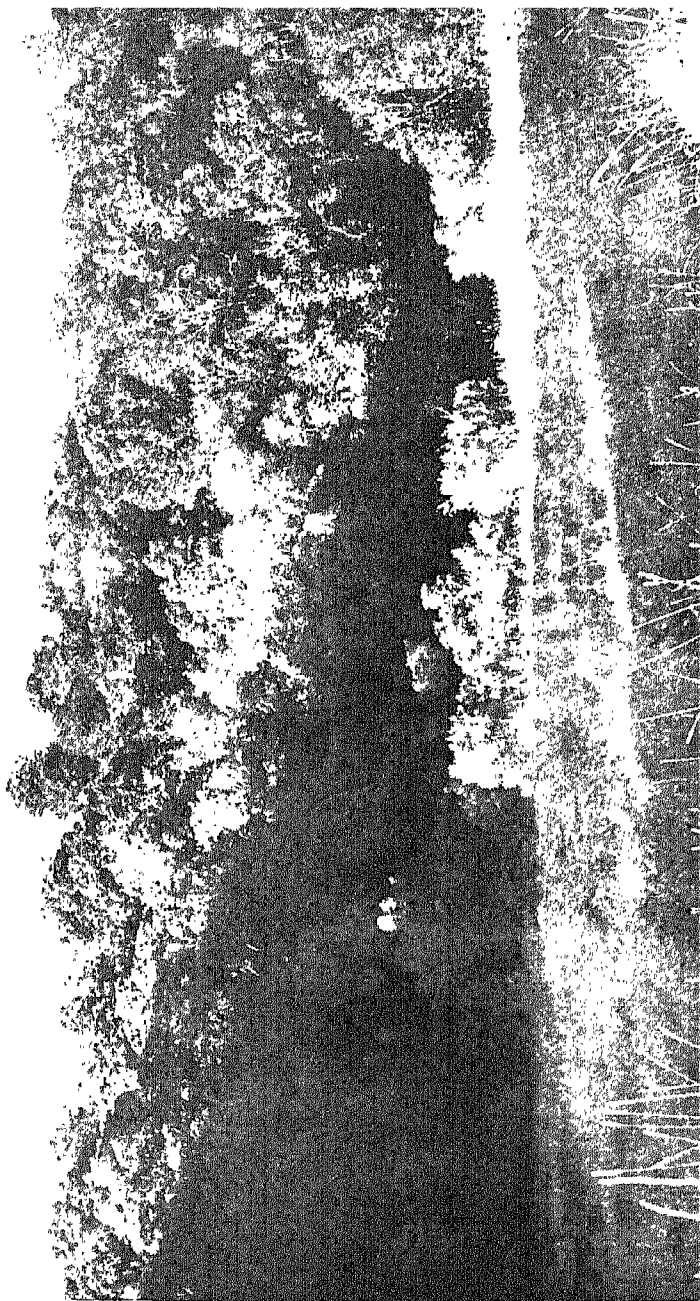
Sitting there alone on my horse I looked back over the desolate years of the war. I remembered the bleak days as a

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

private in the army in Aldershot ; the dark cold winter of 1939 with its damp mists, the snow and the iced parade ground. Lying in my bunk, huddled in a greatcoat and blankets, I would repeat to myself, "Aye, now I am in Arden ; the more fool I ; when I was at home, I was in a better place : but travellers must be content." The terrible thing about being in the ranks after ten years of knocking about Africa is that nobody speaks the same language as oneself. Once you have known the freedom and the utter necessity for self-help, the ways and means of survival in mountain or in desert, the steady aim to fill the pot, and the fire which must be stoked through the night to keep the lion away : once you have known these it is only by forcing the body and the mind that it is possible to see through such a term of imprisonment as that which I spent in Queen's Barracks. We had just spent a July and August at the Fox and Hounds Hotel at Eggesford, fishing in the River Taw when the war broke out. Illness prevented us from sailing on the returning ship to Kenya, and perhaps as well, for she struck a mine near the Goodwin sands. And so, with little funds and with three small children, we were stranded in England, without a home to go to and no clothing other than the necessities of travel. We fled to Cornwall and found a cottage in a fishing village, and then I returned to London and joined up as a private in the Inns of Court Regiment. As I was aged thirty-two I could get into nothing except Signals or the Engineers, and tossing a coin, I was soon trying to master a subject for which I had neither calling nor ability. However, the months dragged out on a meagre pay, and my wife struggled along somehow until a bomb almost accounted for the children, who were dragged to safety whilst she was queueing in the village. Then her illness, and then the good-byes for overseas service ; a wet platform at Paddington as the Western Express drew out amidst the crash of bombs and masonry. As I walked away I remember a cockney girl calling to me, "Cheer up, Duckie, it might be worse."



THE MAU FORIST



OLIVE FOREST

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

She was right, for during those six years of absence I was to plumb deeper into unhappiness, fear, boredom, but also friendship, intense interest in travel, and, let it be said, the personal pride of having served one's country.

Probably it was the contrast in such disparate experiences which lent added charm to these forest glades which lay stretched out below, and possibly their unchanging beauty could lull the mind into timeless forgetfulness of past fears and uncertainties. The intervening years faded as if they had never been, like a dream whose detail vanishes with waking. Africa begets mirages which haunt a man who is exiled until at last he is driven to re-enact the past, and to seek out his old love. Through those six years of war the past would pursue me, like going through the empty rooms of a deserted house. My old life of youthful marriage with young children seemed to follow me from room to room, like the movements of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in unrelenting pursuit. Lying out in the deserts of Somaliland or the forest and mountains of Abyssinia I would start in the night at some noise and then lie wakeful till dawn, my mind stirring the embers of the past, hearing the passing of a herd of elephant or waiting for the first doves to call from the waterhole.

To some it is the hot thornbush of the Northern Frontier with its vast emptiness and its rocky peaks starting out of the plains ; the warm sand of the dry river-beds and the everlasting cooing of doves near water. The game watering beneath the Dom palms, or the bustle and lowing of cows, the grumbling of great herds of camels at the brackish wells. Here a man may feel the slender threads which keep him alive in those great waterless tracts which stretch from the Juba River to Lake Rudolf. Only the Somali and the other desert tribes know the seasons for each waterhole or pan, and I can never forget the fate of the Italian column retreating from Afmadu. They set off to find water at a known well only to find it dry, and they died of thirst to the last man. And yet men return

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

to this inhospitable land in search of something which they can find only when encamped beside the shallow rivers which thread their courses down from distant mountains and at last peter out in the sand. These men are for the most part possessed of something which is outside the ken of the normal man; they are what has been described as "tetched," or dedicated, and they have a deep understanding of the peoples of the desert and of the wild game.

Again, it is given to others to yearn for the great grass plains of whistling thorn which stretch for miles down the Great Rift and northwards across Laikipia to the deserts of the Turkana. These are the ranching lands of Kenya with their swamps and their rivers which have their sources in the mountain ranges, with the homesteads clustering beneath the flat-topped thorns beside the watercourses. For much of the year these grazing lands are scorched by the sun and the high north-easterly gales from off the frontier, and they turn to an even brown, scarred only by the trees which follow the winding, dry river-beds. Spouts of dust move slowly across the scene like leeches reaching to the sky, and as the drought holds for month after month, one can marvel at the sleek cattle which live on the sparse but rich stargrass, which, with the passing of the rains, dries into a hay of unsurpassed quality and richness, but which is nonetheless often deficient in trace elements. When the rains at last break, the dry, grey pasture turns to green in a few days, starred with bulbous flowers and of a hue not seen in the higher sourveld. In these lands a man can only see the thorn trees and the clouds, and far away, the snow peaks of Mount Kenya or the towering cliffs of the Rift which light to gold in the evening when the sun sinks into a cauldron of smoke and haze. This is the weft and weave of life for those who love the plains, and it is these homes which have been forged out of the wilderness which hold men and women to this land of their adoption, and it is little wonder that the traveller through our land notes with awe the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

unswerving devotion of the settler to his piece of land and his beasts in the face of every setback of drought or disease. A man who has abandoned his homeland, and who has gone into a far land to create a new home with his own hands, will not lightly throw over that which he has hewn from a wilderness. It is for this reason that Kenya may not be compared with any other tropical possession within the Empire. Men have come here from all parts of the world to create a home, and these men and women, having set out with the idea of never returning, look only forward to the years which lie ahead when they will have built their new home, stone by stone, for themselves and for their children. It is a heartening sight to see a man and his young bride at the outset of their great quest in this new land. When both have their hearts in the day-to-day work of building, the stranger can sense the real meaning of "brave new worlds" in the making, for those are the days of endeavour and deep happiness and understanding which can be found in no other walk of life. Farming in other lands may have become a highly technical business, but in Africa there is still scope for those who seek a way of life untrammelled by the irksome restrictions of society, of custom, or even of dress, in the intensity of living in the limitless freedom of Africa.

For me it is the high hills which hold me enthralled. The forests and the glades ; the rolling downs of oatgrass and the lichen-bedecked cedars of the forest fringe. Not even the cold mists and the storms sweeping down from the hills can drive me from my hill farm, and even though there are times when the sun is not seen, in the season of rough weather, we have built ourselves cosy log houses in sheltered places, and we know that in its own time the sun will clear away the clouds and bring warmth to the cold land and to the plants which have established themselves for the dry months that will follow. Through the first three months of each year the hills dry up and life stands still till the time of the breaking of the rains,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

when a sultry heat gives way to the cool scent of damp earth. It is the time of stored up fertility, and with the first rains the air is filled with the fragrance of forest loam. We in the hills must look to the golden hoof for our living, and on the open plains above the forest lie the wheatlands, but to me, the plough is but an adjunct to farming and my main interest lies in the tending of animals, of rearing cattle and in raising sheep, and to this purpose I set out to find a hill farm in the forest and glades which stretched below me where I stood that early morning, and I chose this one corner as a man would choose a wife, because I felt that here lay my destiny.

Africa changes with every change of altitude. From Gondar to the Zambesi the Great Rift, with many branches, is dominated by mountain ranges which, though infinite in their variety and interest, conform in vegetation and in animal life from sea-level to the snowline. Throughout the length of this rift there is no part so impressive as that which lies in Abyssinia, invaded by our forces during the war and now once more impenetrable. Down this route have come all the great migrations of man. The Hamites, from Arabia and possibly from the ancient Sumerian states, have pressed southwards in waves before each period of desiccation. With each wave the desert has encroached through erosion and through deforestation, so that the Aromatophora of Ptolemy, the spice countries which bordered the Red Sea, round Cape Gardafui and into the Somalias of present times, which were once the land of Punt, and the source of great wealth, are now desolate. The early writers and explorers of those days tell of elephants carried by sea to Egypt for the Pharaohs, they tell of spices and of acacia wood, and their ships penetrated still farther south through the Azanian Sea to Rhapta and the island of Zanzibar. Gold and ivory they sought, and they even brought back reports of the Mountain of the Moon, or Kilimanjaro, though somehow later the name got attached to the Ruwenzori range at the supposed source of the Nile. Ptolemy writes of a

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

traveller called Diogenes who landed at Rhapta in about A.D. 100, and who travelled inland for twenty-five days and arrived at the "mountain of the moon," which he termed "the snow-clad mountain whose snows descend into the lakes of the Nile." Any visitor to Amboseli Lake must agree that at some time the area of the water must have been vast in comparison with the present-day lake, and this great area of water could have led to the belief that the Nile rose at the foot of Kilimanjaro.¹

Before Ptolemy's times there must have been trade from Egypt into Uganda and therefore tales of great lakes in Central Africa were handed down by travellers, and the presence of faience beads in the Lake Nyanza area identical with beads found in the Nile Valley proves at least an exchange of goods. Another curious discovery by G. W. B. Huntingford is that the method of tying spearheads on to shafts by the Tugen of the Kamasia country near Nakuru is identical with the method of Egyptian soldiers, which may be observed carved in wood and now in the Cairo Museum.

Scenically the Rift Valley must be unique. Starting at the Dead Sea, passing down the Red Sea it enters the Danakil Desert south of Assab and plunges below sea-level until it rises again near Diredawa, crossing Abyssinia it branches south of Lake Stephanie, and whilst one branch enters Kenya via Rudolf, Baringo, Naivasha, and south to Manyarra, the other branch passes through Lakes Albert, Kivu, Tanganyika, and Nyasa. Nothing can compare with the grandeur of the valley as it passes through Abyssinia, and I am convinced that this country has the greatest potential of any area in the continent, both as an agricultural country and in mineral wealth. That we abandoned it to a second dark age is one of the greatest riddles of modern times. Once the cradle of wheat-growing, its potential is vast, and the Italians, in their five years there, had open wheatlands with five-mile unbroken

¹ *Azania*, G. W. B. Huntingford.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

furrows north of Addis Abeba, and also in the Gondar and other areas. Wheat and barley were carried from here to the ends of the earth, and the standing crops I saw growing without fertiliser were superior to those of our Kenya Highlands. To a man with an urge to grow two blades where one grew before, the evacuation of Abyssinia was a paradox, because there, if anywhere, modern science could create a new source of food. One day the emphasis will change from maize to wheaten bread, because without this the Bantu will never achieve the stamina to advance. When this happens there will be a need for wheatlands and the empty lands of Ethiopia will be exploited and, perhaps, depleted of their fertility. There is little doubt that the querns and pestles found lying about the sands of the Sahara point to wheat-growing before the sands encroached, and it is equally certain that at some distant future date the Sahara will be fed by the waters of the Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Atbara so that much-needed food can be produced to nourish the ever-mounting population of Africa.

Africa is an empty land of vast potential, and no man can travel through the continent without being stirred by the thought of what might one day be achieved. I have looked down from Amba Alagi to the Danakil Desert, with the salt pans shimmering and glowing in the evening sun. I have climbed the Walcheft Pass to the mountainous land above Gondar and looked over the six-thousand-foot precipice to the north, and I saw Lake Tana from the heights of Culcaber at the source of the Blue Nile, and then I returned to Kenya by devious ways, down the chain of lakes, and I came back with a vision of great untapped lands ; plains and mountains and forests of untold beauty and unknown wealth, abandoned to warring factions and primitive cultivators.

It is not enough to have travelled through the land unless a man is possessed of a knowledge of its potential. To visit a Gothic cathedral with no knowledge of its architecture is to be blind to its real beauty, and so it is in Africa, for to travel

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

without a real understanding of soil and climate, vegetation and altitude, is to fall into the category of a mere tourist.

Those who have had to wrest a livelihood from the soil are possessed of a real understanding which can never be achieved by administrators, civil servants and other birds of passage who stay for a time and then retire to northern climes. It is we, the settlers, who are the very salt of this earth of ours which we till that we might live ; ours is the courage and the tenacity with which we have built this land, largely because, having put our hand to the plough, there is no escape in the form of a pension, and nowhere to retire to when old age comes upon us.

It is chastening to look back over the passed years and to remember these ever-changing scenes, and I stood with my horse looking over the endless forests on that September morning of 1946 with awe, for I knew that I stood on the threshold of many years of work, and that I was setting out on a quest which would in some small measure contribute to the development of this continent of Africa in the moulding of a home from virgin forest land and creating from it a productive farm. As I rode down through the oatgrass, glistening with dew and spangled cobwebs and gossamer, I could hear below me the full-throated roar of the river in spate. Following the long glade down I reached a scarp of rock overlooking the forested gorge, and through a gap in the trees I could see the waterfall glistening where the sun's rays pierced the cedars. Two buzzards wheeled against a blue sky, their wild mewings audible above the roar of the waters, and as I looked over the wild scene I knew that I could work in this valley with its wealth of trees, its virgin grasslands, its wild life, and the great views over the Mau forest.

Riding back up the hill I looked behind me to the river of Dimbilil—the still shady waters—and before passing over the ridge I paused again to look once more to the horizon which was to be my little world for the rest of my days.

2

“ Give me a land of boughs in leaf,
A land of trees that stand ;
Where trees are fallen, there is grief
I love no leafless land.”

A. E. HOUSMAN,

A PIECE of Africa : hills and valleys clothed in forest and the grassland glades winding down and up through the trees like inland seas and fjords biting deeply into the coast-line. The vast unchartered bamboo of the Trans-Mara ; an endless ocean of pale green, uninhabited except by migrating elephant, bongo, and bushbuck living on the succulent new shoots, and still farther the hills fan out on to the Serengeti Plains and sink to Lake Nyanza one hundred miles to the south-west.

Since arriving back in the country after demobilisation I had returned to the ranch which I had been running before the war, and I had been working there for eighteen months before I was finally allocated a settlement farm which lay on the very border of the ranch I was running. When the Settlement Board had put up the first scheme of settlement for ex-service men I had put my name down for this very farm, and though I had been warned that it was a poor mountainous area, I had set my heart on this and no other. For weeks after I had heard of my good fortune I would steal a few hours off from my work and ride or walk down to the place so that I might plan its future development. At first I would plunge through the deep forest and endeavour to get an idea of the lie of the land, but soon I had to get a Dorobo with a knowledge of the area so as to pinpoint springs, boundary marks where they existed, and the main timber for felling at a later date.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

I would leave my horse to graze whilst I paced back and forth through the trees looking for a site for home and buildings. Every corner had to be explored, for in planning a home there is a close relation between the house and the farm buildings, the farmyard and the cultivated land, to say nothing of the cattle roads and the paddocks. The last part of the puzzle is to have water easily accessible to the whole centre of the farm both for the house and for stock when they are enclosed in the paddocks. Once the site has been chosen there can be no going back on one's decision, and so I was hard put to it because sites offered themselves all over the farm, but many of them had to be ruled out owing to the difficulty of getting a car road to the home and farmstead without having to negotiate deep gorges or dense forest. When a man has to make and to maintain nearly four miles of road so as to link with the nearest council road, he will seek the shortest way and the route which lies open to the drying sun, for to enter the forest is to ask for trouble over the years. There also enters the problem of alignment. In the choosing of your route every care must be exercised to take a line and a gradient suitable to the type of road to be constructed. For a long farm road with small funds there can only be one proper way to build, and that is to plough up and harrow down a ten-foot strip which is just sufficient to take a lorry and narrow enough to form two good tracks which, in the wet season, can be maintained with stone where holes form, and which can be drained at twenty- to thirty-foot intervals along the whole length of the road. Add to this the necessity to follow the slopes of any hill below its crest and you then ensure that rain will run straight off the road surface and carry away earth without choking the drains.

I engaged a Dorobo who built himself a hut on the farm and brought his young and gay wife with their baby girl whose skin was red in hue and whom they called "the little red one." A'Towet was a delightful companion, and one of the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

few Africans with whom I have had some mental contact, and with whom I was therefore able to make friends. He was intelligent, quick, quite astonishingly clever at carving wood into walking-sticks, spoons for stirring porridge, and in fact anything which could be adorned, and he would carve designs on any thing useful for the sheer joy of handling something beautiful. I had never met this trait in an African before and we cherished this strange, intelligent hunter whose prowess in the forests was something to marvel at. His knowledge of forest lore, of trapping, of birds and of wild beasts was astonishing, and his tracking of game so uncanny that many years later I was able to get him into the forces as a tracker of Mau Mau, and he went to the top of his profession, as a tracker-policeman, and though he now falls on my neck when I meet him, in gratitude for my help, I know very well that he has his own prowess to thank for his advancement and prosperity.

His eyes were trained from childhood to see everything in the forest, and he could point to signs of passing game and tell within a few minutes how long ago they had passed ; he would point to hidden traps or to the claw-marks of leopard on the boles of trees. We who criticise the Africans for their backward ways should take a lesson in humility at the skill of these Dorobo hunters in contrast with our clumsiness and ignorance. Had we to live, as they can live, by their prowess in the hunt, we should very soon starve, for it is one thing to crash round with a high velocity rifle, but quite another to survive with a bow and arrow and a few wire snares.

With A'Towet's help we sorted out all the problems of siting the home, and my final decision had been influenced by noting that game drank at a pool during the rains, which disappeared in the drier months. I made a dowsing rod out of wire, as the hazel would not work with me, and I set to trying to find the course of the underground stream which I guessed must be not far below surface. In no time I had found water, and the slope of the land suggested which way it flowed, though

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

this is often quite a wrong surmise, and so I continued to trace out the rough course until I found that there was a junction of two streams and that at the point where they met lay the water pan at which the buck would drink. By this time I had three men working for me, and so I started digging a well, and at sixteen feet we struck the flow and the well began to fill. I left further excavation to a later date and decided to build just below the well. As this was in forest, we were to benefit from the rich soil for the growing of a garden and orchard. Then started the heavy work of clearing the trees, and as each root had to be dug out by hand it was a good two months before the area even resembled a clearing, and fires had to be kept burning night and day, and the oxen were kept at hauling for weeks on end before the three acres were ready for planting. The house site was soon ready, however, and I had engaged pit-sawyers to cut up cedar and podocarpus for the floors and fittings. For every other part of the construction I was to use rough timber and poles from the adjoining forest, and soon I had a gang of natives cutting and carting split cedar posts and straight poles in quantity to the site of the house. We had felled a cedar which must have been about three hundred years old. Three spans of the arms could not reach round its bole, and before it fell I had to notify three bee-keepers to remove their hives or they would be smashed and the bees would become a menace. I have no idea how they achieve this feat, but they certainly do not get stung, nor do they upset the bees, but I have no doubt that they get the services of a man whose totem is a bee, and this person handles his charges as a jeweller handles precious stones. The cedar was split into logs for the walls of the house, and the one tree gave sufficient posts for the whole building. Whilst this was going on I would set out with a chisel and a hammer and look for stone suitable for cutting for a fireplace. I found none on the farm and so I had to go down into the forest reserve and, with rough stone cutters, I cut three thousand running

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

feet of 9"×9" and of 9"×6", and as the stone was two miles away I had to build a sledge to carry it at the rate of twenty-five feet at a trip, and as the route lay through the main river and up steep hills, by the end of it all I had wrecked my gear and worn out my oxen.

The logs for the house had to be adzed so that they should fit cosily one against the other, and so as to reduce the cracks which would later have to be filled with cow-dung mixed with chopped grass. With two rooms of 15'×16' and a central bathroom of 10'×10', we were able to allow of a small entrance and an upstairs room with a dormer window. Now began the roof and I had decided that this should have a pitch of over 60° so as to make the thatch last longer and so as to make the roof less likely to leak in heavy downpours. All this time I had to walk or ride over from my work on the neighbouring farm and put in four hours of work daily on the building. I organised the labour so that they were cutting the thatch during the morning and helping me in the forenoon. For days I was aloft fixing the A-pieces in place, driving in every nail and then descending in order to align the roof, as no African such as I was employing at that time had any idea even of a straight line. Only one was able to use a saw and none could drive in a six-inch nail. Cartloads of grass were brought and then the boys went into the forest to cut lianas for tying on the grass. Bamboos formed the bearers for the thatch and this had to be tied on the struts with care, so that the thatching would be even. Here again A'Towet came to my aid and his expert fingers were the making of a good job. It took a month to finish the thatch and we had completed it in time for the first rains which came early that year of 1947 and proved to be one of the heaviest rains for many years. A rough track had reached to within a mile of the house, and all bought materials had to be brought by cart over the last stretch, and one of the heaviest items was the flooring which, being tongued and grooved, we had to buy from a neighbouring sawmill.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Starting a farm requires many materials, and without a road I was so handicapped that I had to stop all other work and get down to the proper construction of three and a half miles. This necessitated ploughing and clearing the route and then harrowing down the earth to a semblance of smoothness. Drains had to be dug all along the length and culverts made of cedar logs placed at certain places so as to carry off excess of water. Impatience is a failing of mine, and whilst this work was proceeding I was champing to be getting on with the farm, but there was nothing for it but to get the road through, as without this I could not even get the furniture to the house and we were due to leave our job on the ranch on 18th March.

The rains never let up in 1947 and so the work on the farm was often held up for days on end, but I was fortunate, for, no sooner had I finished the house than all the farm buildings had to be started, and I could work on through the rain once the roof had been finished. I needed a dairy, and stores for foodstuffs, though the machinery, such as it was, had to stand out in the open as there were more important things to see to. Calves would have to be housed and the separating would have to be done under cover, and so I was at it from dawn to dusk, preparing for the first purchases of cows. A start had to be made soon so as to bring in an income to pay for school fees. The house had cost £100 and I had bought my car out of my war gratuity, though it was to prove inadequate for the work. As I was a Settlement Board tenant I had no rent to pay for five years, and this period was reckoned to be sufficient to see a man through to his first sales of homebred cattle. I was able to borrow a small sum for piping, fencing, and a cattle dip, as these were at the time controlled and difficult to obtain except under a priority. Controls in those days had their evils, and the less said about the difficulties of getting permits the better. I did get 800 feet of piping for the dip and for the wells. The first well had proved sufficient

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

for the house after it had been greatly widened and I had found more water nearby for the stock, and this source has proved to be permanent through the severest droughts. On this one I set up a deep well-pump with a four horse-power engine, and this has been pumping water ever since.

At regular intervals, whenever I received information, I would set off and look at cows. Many were my disappointments after hundreds of miles of travelling, and my journeys took me to the ends of the colony. One of the surest ways of getting good cows is firmly to turn down anything that does not conform to the standard you have set yourself. That standard will be ruled by your knowledge and by the depth of your pocket, and it also largely depends on the system of farming you have decided upon. My system was simple. It revolved on the need to fill the bucket and make a profit as quickly as possible, and history will relate as to whether I succeeded in this. Sour looks from sellers are inevitable, but it is best in the end to turn away if you have doubts and wait for a better opportunity. In the matter of sheep I was more fortunate in being able to buy from one of the best Romney Marsh flocks in the country. I started with eighty ewes and soon bought twenty more, and in the first year I was fortunate to get an almost 100 per cent. lambing, and the wool cheque was substantial even though the price of wool was still low compared with later years. I dosed the sheep regularly, though this was hardly necessary on the new pasture, for in Africa, as I expect elsewhere, it is only when overstocking takes place that worm infestation becomes dangerous.

The children returned from school for their first holiday on the farm and, as the roads had become impassable with the incessant rain, I had to send the rubber-tyred cart with oxen twenty-one miles to the station. They thought it a great lark, but to me the roads were a nightmare, for work of development had to go forward and I could do little except erect paddocks and plant the first fields to oats for silage and to our

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

first acre or so of pyrethrum. This plant which, when dried, forms the base of many insecticides, was to be a cash-crop to help us on our first few years, and as the price has kept up, and as the research workers cannot yet find an adequate substitute, we have kept the crop on in rotation with cattle feed and it has proved a boon to more than one broke farmer. In these early days I experimented with many plants.

Birds, in the form of finches, seedeaters, and waxbills, were my undoing, and when I tried Niger oil I was so infested with rats and mice that the crop was not worth harvesting. Later I shall have more to say on trials, but, on the whole, they turned out to be tribulations. Seed pea-growing was recommended, but the game was too much for this to succeed. Bushbuck would walk down lines of sprouting plants and nip them off to the ground. Francolin would emerge from the forest and nip the roots, and in exasperation I gave up, although one thing did remain, and that was onions. These I have grown in ever-increasing quantities ever since and, having now mastered a routine for this altitude, and having settled on the right variety for this climate, I can now turn over ten tons each year to the Horticultural Co-operative, which handles these crops. Once the farm became more roamed-over by the workers, the buck tended to retire into the quieter parts and so I was not so molested by their depredations, but we had to do some night shooting, and this job I gave to the two schoolboys whom I sent out at night with a head-torch and a twelve-bore, with instructions to shoot only when the eyes stood out clearly in the torch beam, and never to take chance shots as this night shooting makes it impossible to follow up a wounded beast. This form of shooting is not sport but it has the advantage of being almost foolproof in the matter of defending crops. The buck can easily be picked up in the field and approached to within twenty-five yards. The eyes show up brightly and with care the animal drops without ever being conscious again. Only S.S.G. can be really effective,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and rubber shoes are part of the necessary equipment. At first the boys were a little apprehensive lest they met up with a leopard, but they soon overcame their fears and became proficient at this form of hunting.

The rains brought further problems. Day after day they pounded down and by this time we had quite a few milking cows and we had to struggle to get the milking done so that at last we found that the cows could no longer reach the bails. I had to act quickly, and I devised and built a movable bail, on skids, at the rate of one a day, for standing two cows. Also I needed a separator house and calf sheds which could all follow the cows. A water cart for water was made out of the cut-off chassis of a car, and in fact I never looked up from my work in those days, and except for meals, I left the house at dawn and did not return until after dark. I had found out that the African is unable to do sustained work for any length of time, and that, having been taught a single job, he would soon push off on leave, or sign off and go elsewhere, simply because he felt like a change, and thus the work of teaching had to start all over again until, at length, I decided that I would dispense with semi-skilled workers and do the job myself. This lack of continuity in work is most exhausting and exasperating to the farmer who must depend to some extent on a few skilled hands. In the end I was driven to employing Kamba and Kikuyu, and the following pages will relate how the former stood by me and how the latter let me down.

It is futile to rail against the African for his lack of desire to work. Excluding certain tribes who can be relied upon to a small degree, the African as a whole is not addicted to an occupation which has been delegated to the women for untold centuries. I, on this farm, am adjacent to the Kipsigis, Dorobo, and Masai, and to these Hamites work is undignified and not worthy of a warrior. They look upon themselves, when young, as the guardians of the tribe, and though there is no further



WATER CART



MEASURING MILK

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

need for this, they still cling to the idea of an idle life. It is, of course, an incredible piece of impertinence on the part of the European that he should require these men to work, but with the changing economy of the country, and with the impossibility to live off stolen cattle and women, these young warriors are being forced into the labour market and they feel rather at sea. That they despise us and our ten-per-cent. Christianity is certain, and for myself I cannot but honour a man who thinks that the hoe is unworthy of a man who can wield a spear. Our incursions into their lives is a tragedy, because, in their natural state, and in their own surroundings, they are as good as any of us, and only because of their immemorial sport of cattle rustling and raiding are they being suppressed and their energy turned into other channels. We suffered from these thefts, but I never called in the police, preferring rather to put the onus on to the elders of the tribe to find the culprit. Now that I know all the families by name who are prone to thieving, I can trace them more easily, and on one occasion I drove off some of the rustlers' own sheep, much to everyone's amusement.

These highlands have always been the grazing grounds of these nomadic cattlemen, and as each wave of Hamites has descended from the North, they have found their predecessors in occupation and they have either driven them farther or overrun them. One such race, the Sirikwa, have left traces of their occupation all over this farm, and according to Dorobo legend they were red in colour, after the fashion of the Bushmen, great cattle men and dwellers in deep holes excavated out of the hillside and then covered with saplings and sods so as to render them safe from their enemies. Their cattle were impounded in these circular depressions against lion, and also against the Nandi Bear, or Keriit, which in those days abounded in these forests. The manure from these concentrations of cattle has led to an encroachment of the forest and also it is responsible for the rich wheatlands of the plateau which

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

are now carrying the corn crops which feed the country. With the coming of the Masai in the sixteenth century, the Sirikwa were exterminated or driven out, and there are evidences of their dry-stone-wall huts far down in Tanganyika, and a recent reference by Van der Post in his book, *Journey to the Interior*, places some remnants of the Sirikwa on the Nyika Plateau of Nyasaland.

As to the Nandi bear, the reports I have had of its depredations have been so consistent as to convince me that at one time it was fairly common, but that with the arrival of the Masai it became ever scarcer over the centuries. The Masai attack anything which kills their cattle, and this applies also to the Nandi. I lived in the Nandi country for some years during the 'thirties, and I even followed up a report of the damage done to a family by a Keriit. This beast, half real and half mythical, has aroused much interest among hunters and naturalists, but it has so far eluded capture. The African describes it as resembling both a hyæna and a leopard, in that its head is round and is encased in a large ruff of stiff hairs. Its paws are dog-like and almost the size of a leopard's, though of course possessed of non-retractable claws. Its method of attack is to claw away the grass roof of a hut and to attack humans by crushing their head in its jaw. If met in the open, it will rear up on its hind legs like a bear, but will not attack unless provoked. There is little doubt that this animal has existed, and only recently a report has come in of its killing cattle in the forest below this farm, but it appears that the modern African has tended to fasten the name of " Keriit " on to anything which attacks his cattle, and without any real knowledge, other than hearsay, of what the original beast looked like.¹

¹ Since writing the above, the " Keriit " has again made its appearance in September 1955, and I decided to hold a meeting with my old Dorobo friends who live below my farm, and as a result I have, I believe, obtained fresh information from men who know and have seen this animal. It appears that we Europeans have confused the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

issue ever since the animal became of interest to hunters and scientists, and that instead of one beast, there are, or were, two very definite animals, one of which is extinct in Kenya and the other is rare, but still in the forest of West Mau. The Keriit is still in existence, but the "Ketet" (Nandi Bear) has now become legendary, but is vividly described by old men. At my meeting I was assured that as children these men remember their parents never leaving their huts at night without first putting a basket over their heads as they bent down to pass out of the low door. In this way the first blow from the Ketet, whose method of attack was to lie in wait, would be taken on the basket, and the man then slammed the door. The story sounds authentic, and could not have been invented as they were all unanimous on this point.

3

“And so even the most restless wanderer longs at last for his native land, and finds in his poor cabin, at the breast of his wife, amidst his children and the occupations necessary for their sustenance, all the rapture for which he sought in vain in the wide and dreary world.”

GOETHE.

WE had built a deep-thatched cottage after the manner of the English countryman and, our day's work done, we sought but shelter and warmth, and a garden within the circle of trees. Some seek vast views from their home, but for us contentment lay within, and living and working all day in full sight of the forest we were satisfied to curtain off the night, and rest. The children's wild enthusiasm on their return from school was only matched by their eagerness to explore every corner of the farm. Horses were saddled and guns taken out of their oily rags, and the days were only too short, as this was the season of the fighting of forest pigeon, and I had impressed upon them that when they had mastered the dropping of a pigeon in full flight, then they could call themselves good shots.

Those sultry days of April before the rains break are the most trying of the year. Each evening the clouds bank up to the north and east, and a fine drizzle may drive before the gale. Then for a week thunder rumbles far down on the shores of Lake Nyanza, but it is often many days of waiting before the tide turns and the storms gain sufficient impetus to halt the northerly trade winds. By this time the streams are drying up and the waterholes are a patch of mud with a ring of green grass round the verge. The cattle will spend

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

many hours in the forest, knowing full well that the direct rays of the sun sap their energy, though we found that in this first dry season our cattle did not suffer greatly from the drought as the forests contained much forage to keep them in condition, and to keep up their milk yields. So we watched the sky from day to day until at last the clouds massed over the heights behind and the thunder rumbled and echoed down the valley. The wind rose in strong gusts before the first patter of the rain in the trees, and then a silence fell, broken only by the "angelus" of the rain-bird or shrike, whose notes knelled from deep within the forest like the tolling of a bell. I heard the cattle lowing from their distant grazing grounds, and then the roar of the oncoming storm drowned all sounds with the fall of rain on the hard, dry pasture, and as the sound rose I could see the wall of grey bearing down the valley.

What a miracle of transformation the rain brings. Soon the green shoots begin to push up with the accumulated fertility of drought; the forest scintillates with new growth and the birds emerge from seeking their food in the leaf mould, and they feed on the hatching insects of the grasslands and the forest verges. This new stirring of life has no likeness to the slow oncoming of spring in northern climes: nothing of the slow rising of Persephone from the underworld. This sudden uprush of life in Africa is like the spate of a river in a dry river-bed which thunders down from storms beyond the horizon, and which brings life to the scorched desert.

Developing a piece of land of unknown potential has its hazards, and these very often come from unexpected quarters. Buying cattle from other districts exposes them to breakdowns to Redwater and Anaplasmosis of different strains from that which they are liable to pick up on their own farm where they previously grazed. Add to this the grave dangers of buying inbreeding diseases, the worst of which is Epivaginitis, and the mildest, Contagious Abortion, and it will be realised that

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

not only great care, but also expert knowledge is invaluable to anybody who contemplates buying a herd. The safest way is to take a veterinary officer to the farm where you propose to buy, or to insist that you will only buy from clean herds, but clinical examinations do not always reveal the trouble and so the safe method is to buy heifers-in-calf only, and to buy with them an unused bull ready for service. This seemingly simple advice may save a farmer thousands of pounds over the years, and no time spent in avoiding breeding diseases is wasted. Epivag, as it is locally called, is a breeding disease of Africa, and though it hardly affects native cows it can render grade or imported cows completely sterile. There are treatments, but they are long and not always satisfactory, and the lost breeding time almost repays to sell the herd to the butcher and to start again. The Anaplas/Redwater are tickborne diseases, and can therefore be controlled by dipping, and further to this, there are drugs which have varying beneficial effects. These are Sulpha drugs and Pirevan.

The extreme of wet in our first year brought on calf ills and some losses at a time just previous to the introduction of Penicillin, and by constant care and nursing we were able to reduce deaths to a minimum, although they were enough to cause us some worry. At that time there was no vet. in the area and so I had to turn-to and do all my own operations, some of which were successful and others ended in death. Removing an afterbirth is always a tricky affair, and on my first try I removed far too much and killed the cow from internal bleeding. Then, also, we had a large number of bad presentations and I would sometimes have to work long after dark up on the hills trying to turn the calf so that it could be extracted. Wrynecks had me beaten, and the cow had to be destroyed, but with time even these I mastered, though my arms would become so cramped that I could no longer hold the knife to any purpose. Cows get to know a farm and all its dangerous cliffs, and at Dimbilil there are many ravines

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

which took their toll of the cows. Some fell and broke their necks, others broke their pelvis, and we had a number of broken legs. In spite of everything we were progressing and our numbers were rising, but not without having to fight for every sick calf's life.

This farm is unsuited to mechanical cultivation, and to corn-growing, owing largely to the high rainfall and to the long haul to the station. I managed, and still manage, on a minimum of machinery and do all the cultivation and haulage by oxen. Ox transport to the station is not any longer possible as the African gibs at having to walk in this age of fast transport, and it is a reflection on modern times that we and others are not prepared to walk if it can be avoided. Whilst my wife worked at the milking, morning and evening, I was completing the necessary buildings and getting the land ready for plantings. By August of that first year I had planted a few acres of pyrethrum from previously prepared seedling beds and I had thirty acres of oats for hay and silage. During the heavy rains erosion taught me a great deal about the thinness of the glade soils on the slopes of our valley, which rose from 7800 feet to 8300 feet in under two miles. This meant that the smallest path became a torrent during a storm, and as my first planting of barley was a complete failure I was quickly to realise that without adequate fertiliser in the form of double superphosphates I was wasting my time in growing crops on this land which had been burnt by generations of nomads. When I remembered the barley of the steep hillsides of Abyssinia I was convinced that we were lacking in a great deal of fertility which would have to be built up over the years with the help of cattle.

With the sheep we had different troubles. The clean, ungrazed grass put on flesh, but leopards played havoc with their numbers, so that we had to organise hunts on which we had some measure of success though in this forest country there is so much cover that many leopards could not be traced

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

after they had made off. On one of these hunts we had a very exciting time and it almost ended in my being mauled.

The leopard had been treed by the Dorobo and he was lying across a bough at the top of a seventy-foot Musharagi tree. He was difficult to see because of the foliage and I was armed with a shotgun and S.S.G. I took a careful shot at what appeared to be his chin, whereupon he started the descent with roarings and snarlings, whilst his claws ripped the bark like tearing sails. The Dorobo were all round the tree and my son was in their midst. As the leopard approached the bottom fork of the tree he took a shot with his .22 rifle and it pierced the neck. This enraged the beast still more so that it shot through the fork and took a flying jump at me. I had been so fascinated by the scene that I was not ready for this move, and saw, just in time, the body hurtling through the air. It was too fast for me to raise my gun so I threw myself down and the leopard passed over me and dashed off into the forest. Then a hunt began and he was speared in a river-bed. I found that a lantern hung in the sheep paddock at night reduced the attacks by hyæna, but soon the paraffin was stolen by the shepherd and the lamp was always out, so that when I remonstrated with him he left indignantly. This is very typical of the African who considers that he can help himself to anything he requires but which he would never pay for himself.

The African hunter is a pleasant person to meet and to go hunting with, but when he sets his traps on the farm, both cattle and sheep are liable to be caught, and this entails losses and also it requires a general combing out of the forests in order to remove the offending nooses. It was an uphill matter trying to point out that there was all Africa in which to set traps and that this trapping within my boundaries was a loss to me. Eventually I laid down that unless all traps were removed within a certain time I should turn my cattle and sheep into standing crops, and at last it began to sink in.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Our garden and orchard began to take shape, and by August we had a hundred fruit trees planted out in the form of apples, pears, plums, and peaches. By September the garden was ablaze with annuals and bulbous plants, with the promise of many lilies in the following years. Daffodils and jonquils began to show, and by dint of raiding neighbours' gardens we soon had an assortment of flowering shrubs, and rose cuttings of a large variety of roses. We put in a prodigious amount of work round our home so as to create something of beauty in a wilderness of trees and grasslands. If life cannot be bettered by a garden, then life can become drab indeed, and I have noted that unless the garden is tended in Kenya there is also a lack of interest in the farm. At first the roses were rather jumbled, but soon we recognised each bloom from Dainty Bess to Mermaid, Poulson, and Corral Cluster, and in time we had ramblers climbing everywhere, and when the lawn had grown level and green we could look at the garden with some pride.

The bustle of a mechanised farm had little in common with the life we led at Dimbilil. Though the machine seems to have merged not only the modern farm but also the western world to a pattern: in spite of pylons and prefabrication, at least our little world remained inviolate and we contrived to live as our ancestors have lived since time immemorial. The cycle of the seasons, the ebb and flow of sap, seedtime and harvest, was all that concerned us, and I cannot see that better use of the land is necessarily linked up with higher mechanisation. I have never subscribed to the idea that the bigger a thing becomes the better it functions, and the idea that a tractor, unless used for three hundred days in the year, becomes a liability, has led to more abuse of the land than any one factor in the problem of falling fertility in Africa. A tractor can be an invaluable aid to production when coupled to a systematic rotation, green manuring, carrying of muck to the land, silage making, and the crushing of human and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

animal food, but when one looks round at the wholesale ploughing up of valuable pasture land, the night and day rush to beat the season, and to rip up Africa, then, for myself, I prefer to tend my animals and aim at quality rather than quantity. Maybe there is a streak of laziness in me ; perhaps I prefer to have the time to stand and stare rather than have to clean the dirty plugs of a tractor. After all, life is not so long, so why race round like a bluebottle intent on speed and on irritating your fellow men.

“ Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods,
Half asleep as they stalk.”

It certainly fits the picture of ox-ploughing, but it has also the quality of land everlasting.

For myself, whose labours are on the land, I can only find sanity in following the slow deliberate process which Nature ordained, and I feel that vast gulf which separates me from the living graveyards of industrial England. 'To live and to work within the circle of these hills is my whole ambition, and even though the world beyond may be seeking its modern crocks of gold at the foot of automation, I know full well that my wealth lies in doing the job which lies nearest to hand. I suppose that there comes a time when a man no longer requires new things in order to stimulate the mind. Farming on the whole is a repetitive affair, and the wonder lies in the sameness of each season as it unfolds itself from year to year. Therefore it is the town-bred mind which needs the distractions of modern science and entertainment, so that it is quite common in Kenya to hear people say that they never listen to the wireless unless perhaps to hear the news. This is a symptom which indicates a satisfied way of living, and which resents the vulgarisation of mass amusements. To me, at least, the latest developments in English holiday camps are too appalling to contemplate, and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

it is also frightening to think what might happen to Africa when travel reaches the stage when it will be possible to spend a week-end in one of our game parks much in the way that Hampstead Heath is visited by the London workers at a Bank holiday. I trust that I am in my grave by then and that my spirit does not haunt the foothills of the Mara game park.

With the coming of September there is a lifting of the clouds, and in October comes all the warmth and the sunshine of showery but brilliant days. The evenings are deathly still, and after the afternoon shower the forest round our home seems to hover, awaiting the rising of the great winds which come with the end of the year. Distant sounds echo from the hills opposite, and the bark of a disturbed bushbuck can be heard within the hanging forest above the winding river. The colobus call to each other across the valleys, and, though out of sight, the insistent cry of the eagle can be heard far above in the blue sky. When the night descends the hyrax screams like the wailings in Dis, and our children say that when they return home it is this lonely cry in the night which brings back to them memories of childhood. As I lie awake, listening to the cry of owls and nightjars, or the plaintive cry of a migrating plover, I am suddenly roused by the coughing of a leopard, and the dogs are called in for safety to the room, lest they be taken.

So passes the pageant of the year, and for those who know and love it there can be no greater happiness than to share this scene, and though many may find this life has no appeal, to others who saw all the futility of war, the folly of politicians and the commercialisation of post-war England, this at least is a sanctuary which even as I write is being invaded by the backlash of those petty party politics of a nation determined to throw its colonial empire to the wolves.

You may hear people complaining of this country, but when all is said and done—and much is said about the Kenya settler—he has discovered one of the fairest lands on this

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

animal food, but when one looks round at the wholesale ploughing up of valuable pasture land, the night and day rush to beat the season, and to rip up Africa, then, for myself, I prefer to tend my animals and aim at quality rather than quantity. Maybe there is a streak of laziness in me ; perhaps I prefer to have the time to stand and stare rather than have to clean the dirty plugs of a tractor. After all, life is not so long, so why race round like a bluebottle intent on speed and on irritating your fellow men.

“ Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods,
Half asleep as they stalk.”

It certainly fits the picture of ox-ploughing, but it has also the quality of land everlasting.

For myself, whose labours are on the land, I can only find sanity in following the slow deliberate process which Nature ordained, and I feel that vast gulf which separates me from the living graveyards of industrial England. To live and to work within the circle of these hills is my whole ambition, and even though the world beyond may be seeking its modern crocks of gold at the foot of automation, I know full well that my wealth lies in doing the job which lies nearest to hand. I suppose that there comes a time when a man no longer requires new things in order to stimulate the mind. Farming on the whole is a repetitive affair, and the wonder lies in the sameness of each season as it unfolds itself from year to year. Therefore it is the town-bred mind which needs the distractions of modern science and entertainment, so that it is quite common in Kenya to hear people say that they never listen to the wireless unless perhaps to hear the news. This is a symptom which indicates a satisfied way of living, and which resents the vulgarisation of mass amusements. To me, at least, the latest developments in English holiday camps are too appalling to contemplate, and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

it is also frightening to think what might happen to Africa when travel reaches the stage when it will be possible to spend a week-end in one of our game parks much in the way that Hampstead Heath is visited by the London workers at a Bank holiday. I trust that I am in my grave by then and that my spirit does not haunt the foothills of the Mara game park.

With the coming of September there is a lifting of the clouds, and in October comes all the warmth and the sunshine of showery but brilliant days. The evenings are deathly still, and after the afternoon shower the forest round our home seems to hover, awaiting the rising of the great winds which come with the end of the year. Distant sounds echo from the hills opposite, and the bark of a disturbed bushbuck can be heard within the hanging forest above the winding river. The colobus call to each other across the valleys, and, though out of sight, the insistent cry of the eagle can be heard far above in the blue sky. When the night descends the hyrax screams like the wailings in Dis, and our children say that when they return home it is this lonely cry in the night which brings back to them memories of childhood. As I lie awake, listening to the cry of owls and nightjars, or the plaintive cry of a migrating plover, I am suddenly roused by the coughing of a leopard, and the dogs are called in for safety to the room, lest they be taken.

So passes the pageant of the year, and for those who know and love it there can be no greater happiness than to share this scene, and though many may find this life has no appeal, to others who saw all the futility of war, the folly of politicians and the commercialisation of post-war England, this at least is a sanctuary which even as I write is being invaded by the backlash of those petty party politics of a nation determined to throw its colonial empire to the wolves.

You may hear people complaining of this country, but when all is said and done—and much is said about the Kenya settler—he has discovered one of the fairest lands on this

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

world, and knowing this he is loath to see it thrown away because of an idea which in the passage of the years will change and become a thing of the past. Is there such a thing as progress in a world seemingly intent upon suicide ? Can any man state here and now that the truths of today will be those of tomorrow ? I have found that today's truth is tomorrow's lie and that all that really counts is that men and women should consider those frail human rights which belong to each man and to endeavour to apply them for the good of each and every man. This does not imply concessions which are not in the interests of all, but rather does it insist that the weal of a community must be paramount and that men must conform within, and insist that their leaders give or take according to their capacity.

4

" I have not understood humanity,
But those plain things, that gospel of each year,
Made me a scholar of simplicity."

The Land, V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

AS I look back over the years their sameness make each merge into the other. If there is any difference it is because of the slow fruition of our work into a herd of cows which fill the eye, or because we had discovered the crops which would bring their return both as something achieved and in the form of a cash return. After all is said, we are here to make a living out of the land, and all our efforts have been directed towards that objective, even though we have found many pleasures on the way. When the White Winter Permaines were first laden with apples we derived intense pleasure from eating them and from storing them for the future, but apples do not keep as they do in Europe, for lack of winter. One year we planted brown trout in the River Kipsonoi, which is our boundary with the forest, and two years later we pulled out a three-pounder. This was something to brag about, but our talk was rather cut short when we discovered that the trout were not breeding, and that we were in fact merely pulling out the trout we had planted, and that when the floods had carried down many fish to the lower reaches we should once more have a fishless river.

The next river to us, the Itari, is stocked with rainbow trout and these have now thrived for thirty years, so that the problem there is to reduce the number of fish per acre so as to allow of growing out. There is little doubt that the forested nature of our river is the cause for the lack of breeding and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

that there is insufficient sunlight to encourage the fish. On the other hand, fresh-water crabs can be a limiting factor, and these pests increase out of all proportion when the otters have been trapped. The Dorobo treasure these otter pelts for capes, and so we find, unlike in England, that the lack of otters is the direct cause of the lack of fish. We cannot stock with rainbow as the lower reaches of this river are already stocked with thriving brown trout, but owing to waterfalls it is not possible for the fish to come upstream, and as the river has never been explored in its forest reaches there is no knowledge of what might lie between my farm and its point of exit into the Sotik, forty miles below.

One year whilst an African was digging in his field he unearthed an elephant tusk which weighed seventy pounds, but which must at one time have been in the region of ninety pounds. The elephant must have been either killed here by Dorobo, or have died a natural death, but whichever it was, it must have been about a century ago because the oldest man in these parts had no recollection of such an important happening. Then a Dorobo set a trap in a valley by the farm boundary and caught a lioness who had been causing deaths amongst our cattle. These are the landmarks in our lives, as they must be where life moves slowly with the passing of each season. Sometimes it is a humdrum affair, and almost overpowering, but there are interests and compensations, and there are books and the music of the Prom concerts which offset the feeling of being completely cut off from the outside world. I suppose that in actual fact it is ours that is the outside world, and that we listen and read of the inside world of civilisation, and in this we are like the Cornishmen of the last century who thought everywhere was "furrin' parts" except their own county. To expect too much outside of one's own home in Kenya is to cry for the moon, and that is why so many partnerships both in business and also in marriage may founder for lack of realisation of this one fact. There is gaiety to be

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

had and there is good companionship, but ultimately the onus is on oneself to discover happiness where it may be had in one's own home.

For me a few hours casting a fly beside the river, or a walk down to the outhurds, watching and listening to the birds of the open land and of the forests can bring contrast to life, and each month I watch for the migrants on their journeys to and from the North or to other parts of Africa in search of the changing insect life and the fruits. The pallid and the montagu harriers winter here from the Caspian Sea and the Danube Delta, and many others pass through, though I will deal with them in later pages. We have a host of residents who, when we first cleared the forest, disappeared for a whole year and only returned when the garden had been established and the felling of trees finished. Now our garden and orchard are a sanctuary and every description of bird nests within our clearing, from the augur buzzard to the minute dusky flycatcher. For the most part these resident birds are fiercely territorial, and as I go about my same paths day after day I meet with them and know their domains.

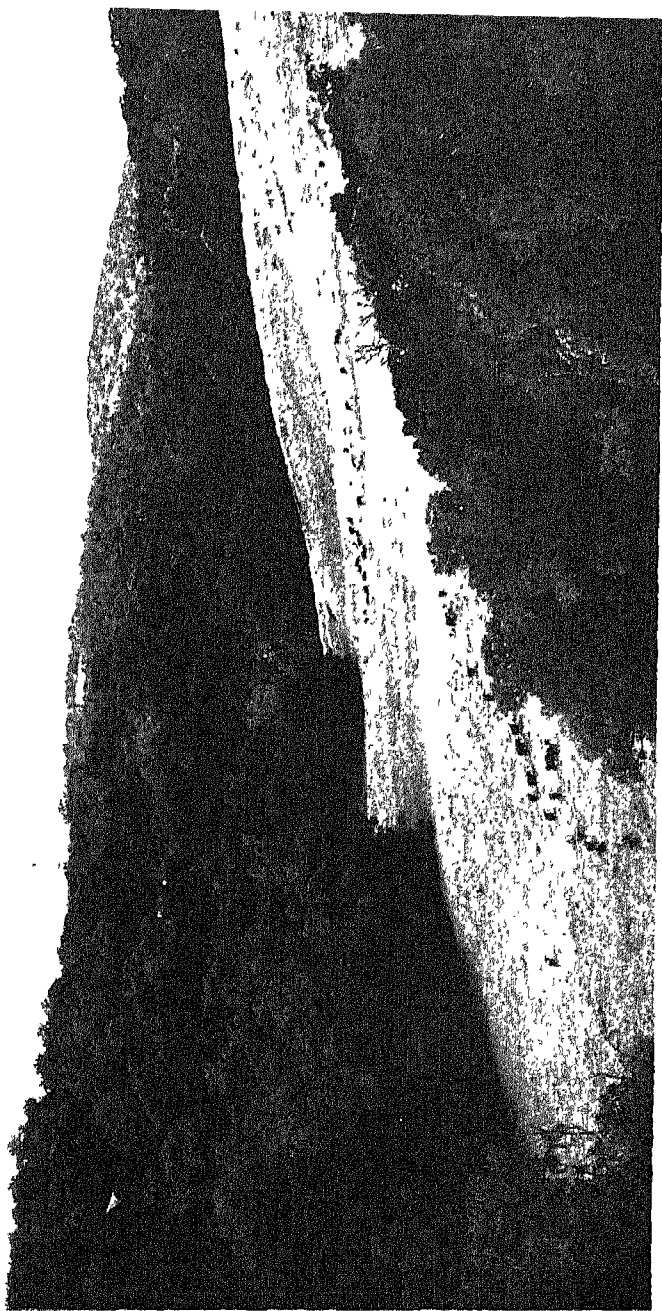
At this time I started keeping pigs and I bought four sows and a boar. As I could not grow barley I decided to supply weaners only, and as the pigs ran out all day in the forest and wallowed in the waterhole, I had only to give them any quantity of separated milk that they would consume and large quantities of pig potatoes which my labour grew and sold to me. This was an admirable system until the Pig Board decided that all pigs must be shut up for fear of swine fever, and from that day, some years later, I did not get the results of the early days when I was able to run them as did our Saxon fathers in early England. However, they did us well, and we averaged nine or ten to the litter for some few years, but as soon as they were shut up all manner of deficiency troubles became apparent and I was almost thankful that my old pigboy turned out to be an ardent adherent to Mau Mau, and was led off to prison.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

On one occasion we were taking weaners to the station when, somehow, one jumped out of the back of the truck. My wife and daughter were in their best clothes but I insisted that alone I could not catch the little brute, and so a hunt started, and as it was over stubble lately taken off by a combine I hardly dare describe the state of the ladies' stockings, and but for the help of a stray African I doubt whether the pig would ever have been retrieved. It goes without saying that we had to return home for a change before setting out again, and after that incident I took rather more care to tie down the pig-net over the back of the car. Wild pig were the cause of the shutting up of the farm pigs, and owing to the introduction of an export trade in bacon to England this law was necessary so as to avoid the introduction of fever to England.

Poultry we tried, but in our climate they did not thrive, so that it was my firm belief that every hen died in debt. One year I noticed that the farm had spent £100 on feeding-stuffs and, as the proceeds of the eggs went to my wife, I started an anti-hen-keeping campaign which at last ended with our going out of these birds except for sufficient for our own needs. This is so like Africa where you have to find out everything for yourself. That is probably why the farmers of Kenya are such individualists, for they have had to learn the hard way and they take ill to the experts who could not earn their own livings on the land, but are quite prepared to tell others how to do so. Witness the fiasco of the Groundnut Scheme when experienced farmers offered their advice which was refused by the experts straight from England. Also there was the failure of the Gambia chicken farm, and all told, the British taxpayer has had to face some bills for these failures, but probably he still has confidence in the expert who advises him, and who, in the process, picks up a good job.

Any experiments which I have carried out have been at my own cost and I am therefore rather chary of the fellow with new schemes to try out on the taxpayer. I am not suggesting that



KARAU GLADE



ROMNEY FLOCK ON THE BURNT HILLSIDE

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

these persons have not some good ideas, but it is so easy to be an enthusiast when someone else will take the risk.

November is the month of light gusty drizzles and intense rainbows. The passing storms race before the strengthening northerly winds from the high hills behind us and sweep down over the oatgrass slopes to the forest. The Kipsigis call the rainbow God's Apparel, and think it fortunate if the colours pass through where they stand. Many evenings as I stand recording at the milking the storm engulfs me and roars away down the valley, leaving behind it the scent of damp earth. Then a stillness falls which is only broken by the dripping of leaves and the questioning song of a robin. It is a pastoral which stirs those who have lived apart from cities, and it is a part of our love for this country. Through all the trials of existence in Africa, such small things enrichen life and cause us to cleave to our homes, for it is those things which we know, that we love, and they remain with us through the years in endless rote. Beethoven, in his Sixth Symphony, projected this scene as something that might be remembered in winter days, and after blindness had descended upon him, and for us, after night has closed over the forest, his notes live to remind us of the past.

As I look down over the forest below I think of the time, not so far distant, when the trees will disappear under the axe. In the days when forests were preserved in England our Saxon forebears spoke of "axe the informer," and in this Mau forest the axe is still the informer, though it may well become the destroyer. In these modern times everything is being sacrificed in the scramble for exploitation of natural resources, and I can see these forests scorched and scarred when the flood-gates are opened in response to the clamouring demands of African politicians with no understanding of the conserving powers of forests, and with no care for the future. The Kikuyu tribe, having stripped their reserve of its vast forests, had, in the event of the success of the Mau Mau rebellion, every

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

intention of stripping this forest, and to this purpose my Kikuyu head-boy had been entrusted to become chief of this area after I had been eliminated. The fiasco of the Kikuyu settlement of tenant farmers at Olenguerone was at once the result of hard-core Mau Mau agents who refused to carry out their agreements, and who also refused to move from the settlement when told to do so by the Government.

The Kikuyu who went to Olenguerone had been instructed to lay hands on the area in the Mau forest and not far from this farm, and when they refused to abide by the laws of good husbandry under the guidance of an agricultural officer, they had to be evicted by force, so as to save the land. At the time we knew nothing of Mau Mau, and the settlers of this area unwittingly signed on many of these tenants and this led to much trouble at a later date. Had the troubles at Olenguerone been sifted and brought to light, we might have had a different story than that which now bedevils the scene in Kenya.

I suppose that it is useless to regret the changes that are taking place in modern times. Since time began the Dorobo have lived in these forests, and this experiment at Olenguerone, which mercifully failed, has given these hunters a further lease of life. The Dorobo have now been moved in where the Kikuyu went out, and the idea now is to clear great areas of the Trans-Mara bamboo country and to put it down to grazing in the form of Kikuyu grass. Each clan is being given an area and the scheme promises well. At the end of this book I give more details of these interesting peoples who have their branches in many parts of Eastern Africa. In the early days each Dorobo had his territory both for hunting and for honey, and though this does still hold for some, for the most part the people are scattered. Now, with the commercialisation of skins for furs and honey for the making of mead, greed has entered the forests and the animals are being persecuted. It is a sad commentary on modern progress that fills me with a deep resentment for a generation of vipers. Fortunately we

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

have a humane Game Department, staffed with men who are enthusiasts and not civil servants, but they are impotent against the machinations of nasty little shopkeepers who act as receivers of poached trophies, and whose eagerness to obtain the aphrodisiac properties of a rhino horn leads to the slow extinction of this harmless beast. To take it further, I blame the mincing fancy boys of the fashion houses and their sophisticated parasites who adorn themselves in leopard-skins, hyrax pelts, and all the paraphernalia of tarding.

Round our home all the birds and animals are protected, except in very special cases. Recently a bushbuck was hunted by some farm boys, and though pierced by an arrow it took refuge on our verandah. I was so upset at this happening that I have now threatened to shoot at anyone hunting in my forest, with the excuse that I believe them to be Mau Mau gangsters. This has put an abrupt end to hunting, and as a result a bushbuck now comes out on to the lawn of an afternoon and grazes until disturbed by the collies. It has even made its form in the long grass behind the old house and we never disturb it, as these animals are quite the most lovely of the wild game of the forests. Even the wild pig have returned, and though they are hardly welcome, they are an assurance that the forest is not being hunted.

Farming practice in Kenya on the whole is far behind that of England, and experienced farmers from the home country are often very critical of our methods and of our great empty areas. These can easily be explained as, up to the last war, the country was afflicted by the depression, prices were low and capital for development almost unobtainable. Add to this the fact that the farmers were for the most part men who had never farmed before taking up their land ; men with good educations who could not or would not hold down a job in England because of some streak of adventurousness which drove them to seek their fortunes in a new land. These are the men who now come in for a spate of abuse and even ridicule,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and, as I am one of them, I resent the manner in which we are criticised for every thing that happens in Kenya ; and often quite unjustly blamed when things go wrong, but always it is forgotten that the country owes everything to the tenacity and the enterprise of those who, after all, produce the wealth from the land in a country whose only wealth is agriculture.

We know as well as anyone, and perhaps rather better, the shortcomings of our methods of husbandry, but it is seldom acknowledged that we have reached our present state of farming largely by our own efforts and that though we have been enormously helped by our scientific advisers and helpers, any progress has been at our expense and that the building up of our stock has been by direct importations from England. Wheat-breeding by specialists has been one of the great contributions by the relevant department of agriculture, and our veterinary services have been excellent, but nonetheless let it be never forgotten that the pioneers lost huge sums in building up a foundation of farming practice, and that any building which has followed has been upon the work of the first settlers. I think that we have now passed the survival stage in the establishment of the stock industry, and that all that holds us back is the danger of infection which comes from the native reserves. Probably, however, the native Boran cow has done more for our establishment than any other factor, and that we owe to the native cattle more than we are prepared to admit. Be that as it may, there is little doubt that European cattle could never have made the grade without this backbone of native blood, and this becomes more apparent with the raising of lactations of native stock to 400 gallons. If only this figure could be even so much as approached throughout the country, and not only on the European farms where management is good, then we should see the elimination of scrub animals which are only kept to pay for bride prices and whose real danger to the country is the overstocking which they create. It is such things which should be tackled long before the African

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

is taught to argue in the synagogues. When an African can understand the argument which insists on selective breeding of cattle he will be on the way to self-help, and when he insists on the terracings and rotations for his land which are shown to him but are resisted on political grounds, then we can begin to admit him to our counsels, but certainly not before this has taken place. The country is cursed with people who insist upon showing the African short-cut methods to self-government, making money quickly, running his own affairs whilst yet he beats his wife and makes her a beast of burden, and other similar ways of getting more for doing less. In the end it is the African who suffers, because his economy never rises owing to his refusal to start by doing a day's honest work.

I tilt at windmills, and I know that people only change their way of life when necessity presses hard upon their heels, and as yet in Africa a man can always scratch something from the soil and so real want is not present as it is known in Europe. Therefore my Quixotic sallies are largely wasted on air though the time is approaching when they will be hitting at the very foundations. I merely tilt at the void which exists between the potential and the actual production of our land, and of course the limiting factors are a lack of capital and also this insistence by the African to sit and scratch himself in the sun. As the sun is always shining what is there to persuade him to do otherwise? A statement was recently made at "high level" that only 5 per cent. of European farmers properly farmed their land. This was, of course, a typical half-truth by one who had never farmed himself, and who would not know where to lay his hands on capital if he did find himself in need. Not only the settlers but the opposite camp, whoever they may be, make stupid remarks which are calculated to raise blood pressure in a country already living at high altitude, and these remarks are of course made into currency, and the makers of these remarks forget that they

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

draw their pension on retirement from those very persons they damn.

Below me I see the cattle moving slowly along the glade with the sound of scythes mowing grass. I watch them and wonder how long we shall be left to live this life in peace in our lovely land : whether our children will know this freedom which we have enjoyed ? They will have to fight for it, that is certain, for many would live as we have done, but few have had the will to create something with their own hands. Instead, they would snatch away that which they did not strive for themselves.

We have the earth and the sky, the rain and the sunshine, all good things, and we have our beasts and a garden to tend, and a home within the trees. Beyond these things there is little that a man could need unless it be the companionship of a loving woman and the tools wherewith to work, for it seems to me that civilisation is ebbing and that it is better to turn one's face away from the hatred of nations and to seek harmony in our forest glades.

5

“To stand up straight and tread the turning mill,
To lie flat and know nothing and be still
Are the two trades of man ; and which is worse
I know not, but I know that both are ill.”

A. E. HOUSMAN.

THERE are many ways of building up a herd of cows, but in the end, in Africa, the choice lies in either making a hobby of it or of making a living. With the limited means at my bank I chose the second way, first, out of sheer necessity, and secondly, because in Kenya the choice of cattle is so limited, and really first-class cattle so hard to come by, that one is driven to buying any breed of any cow of any colour so long as it fills the bucket. For those who can wait there is little doubt that to buy the native Boran cows and to put them to pedigree bulls is the best method of starting a herd, but with children at school we had no option but to adopt the method of quick returns, and I also decided that with a herd so mixed I should be advised to buy bulls of two breeds so as to sort out the various cows into their proper categories. It proved at first to be a ghastly mess, but order had to be brought out of chaos, and I was getting the milk to pay for much of the cost of the farm. It is useless to put a Jersey bull to a Shorthorn cow, so I bought an Ayrshire bull to use with both the Ayrshire and the Shorthorn cows, and in the same way I bought two Jerseys in order to serve the lower grade cows nearer to the native, and to all the Guernsey types which I have picked up on my travels.

In this way I was to stamp a higher butter-fat content on the resulting heifers. After the first generation, Jerseys and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Ayrshires predominated with a few nondescripts, but by dint of culling I am now with a herd of Ayrshire followers which will, during the next two years, replace all other breeds. It has taken seven years to achieve uniformity, though even now many of the original Jersey heifers predominate in colour through their offspring, and though it is not undesirable to have Jersey colouration, this breed can produce a variety of colours from "broken" to "brindle" when in any way crossed, and these aberrations are extremely difficult to eradicate, as it would seem that they are original in that the prehistoric colourations must have followed these trends. I have had to cull heavily and at last I hope that I am on the road to achieving all that I have been striving for over the last number of years.

We are breeding now a stocky type of Ayrshire in no way resembling the big-boned animals of their origin in Scotland, but these smaller beasts can well cope with our hilly grazing and do not require so much bulk feed. I do not aim at record-breaking because my herd has to walk too far in a day's grazing to make this possible, and I do not feed according to the book because I am sure that this does not pay under my semi-extensive conditions. Heavy feeding can only pay if combined with paddocking and easy access to water, and with eighty cows to run in the milk herd this would be out of the question, though at night they can approach these conditions, and as a cow does 40 per cent. of her feeding at night, I feel that I do all possible to maintain both condition and milk under the prevailing conditions on my farm.

The shape of the farm adds to the difficulties of grazing, and the fact that I have to do the milking on the high parts where the cultivated land requires the presence of the movable bails, adds a mile or more to the distance they have to cover each day. Through always being understocked I have been able to split the grasslands into five defined areas which are visited in rotation, and in this way the grass is fresh, at

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

least all through the growing season, and the cows have time to lie up at midday in place of being continually on the move.

All calves are removed from their dams at birth and are hand-reared on six pounds of milk until they are three months old. Then they are weaned, over a period of one month, to separated milk, at the rate of one pound exchanged for separated, each week. As all bull calves are sold at a week old this ensures a reasonable cream output for sale to the creamery. At three pounds of milk and three of separated, a teaspoonful of cod-liver oil is added and this is given until the calf is nine months old or until it refuses to drink. The calves are then branded and drafted to the empty heifer herd which is herded at the bottom end of the farm, and at twenty months old they return to the heifer-in-calf herd where they run with a bull. During the early years we so suffered from bull losses and shortages that I now run up to eight bulls on the farm. I can sell one at will but I am always certain of having enough should any get injured or diseased. I also keep a good pedigree cow which, when served by my best stud bull, Gendin Victory, produces me either a pedigree heifer or a bull which can go into the Stud Book.

My stud bull, Gendin Victory, is by Kerse Park Chosen Crown and out of Killeen Violet, whilst my other stud bull, Kivulini Nomad, is of Auchenbrain blood with a line of Bargower intermingled. Besides these, I have two other pedigree bulls bought from outside, and a home-bred bull also with Kerse Park and some Rowallan blood, and I complete the picture with three grade bulls which are virtually for sale, but which run out as spares in case of accidents. I gave £300 for the first-named bull and £200 for the other, and as I keep three further bulls and use them it will be almost impossible to get to the state when I start inbreeding to any dangerous degree, and anyhow I have no rooted objection to a closed herd so long as you know your bull. In my method, and by recording all services, I shall, over a period of time, be able to

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

spot the best bulls and keep them on, and in this manner of having many bulls I shall have a proven bull long before I should had I followed the normal procedure of buying one bull at a time.

My heifers from the two stud bulls are coming in to calve shortly, and they are in calf to one of two other bulls which run only with the fifty in-calf heifer herd. The time will of course come when I shall have to buy more bulls, but I believe not for many years. Then as to the grade bulls. These are all by Victory and they are out of high-grade cows giving from 1000 gallons to 780 gallons. They are, in fact, better than either of my second string of pedigree bulls, and this fact sets one thinking, and makes one wonder where the charm lies in a piece of paper from the Stud Book. I have no inhibitions in the matter of using good grade bulls, and in past experience I have discovered that in some cases the progeny from these bulls are far superior, on an average, than from pedigree, but the limiting factor is that the good ones are rare and it takes a long time to prove its worth, and during that time much time is wasted. In eight years I have only kept these three bulls and I will back any of them against a pedigree bull with the same amount of milk behind it. Victory's dam gave 12,000 lbs. at 4 per cent., and for an Ayrshire this is exactly what is required under our conditions. Another consideration regarding grade bulls is their constitution, which I have proved to be far better than any more finely bred animal. They never ail, in fact, and will run out under any conditions, and of course they are usually more potent on less feed.

Owing to tickborne diseases we do not dip our calves for the first eight months of their lives. Except for East Coast Fever, which is not endemic at our high altitude, unless introduced by susceptible cattle, all the tickborne diseases can be given to young stock and they will for the most part recover and obtain a natural immunity. That is to say, that

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

if you expose them to ticks when a few weeks old the diseases will run their course and will not recur except occasionally in a mild form. This system is a dangerous one at lower altitudes where East Coast Fever would play havoc, but with us it is safe, and it has the added advantage of our being able to guarantee to buyers of our stock that the animals are immune, and since the two diseases Anaplasmosis/Redwater account for great numbers of stock each year, this is a valuable asset to buyers.

As I have previously described, I travelled hundreds of miles in search of cows, and eventually I had collected together 175, many of them heifers in calf and some of them empty heifers. Since then I have reduced to an average of 150, in milk and dry, and though I drop far below this figure after sales, I try to maintain this figure as my peak. This means anything up to 100 milking at a time, and as milkers are sometimes hard to come by, and as it requires one milker to ten cows, there are times when I am hard put to get the milk into the churn. One year we produced 20,000 lbs. of butter-fat from our herd and this was the highest output per acre per cow in the whole area. Everything centres round management and supervision of a herd in Africa. With the numbers being handled there is little doubt that the African is not capable of thinking of all that is required and so matters go wrong and the smallest slip in care can lead to disaster. One of our greatest difficulties on this forest farm has been to prevent cows from straying off into the forest to calve. We have had cows out for days and search parties hunting the forests and the glades for these wanderers, and it seems that certain cows need to be put into a very solid enclosure for they will break through any ordinary fence, and cut their udder to pieces in the process, but calve out they will, and they are a real trouble. I am not going into the various diseases and their cures in the pages of this book as this could not possibly interest many readers, though we have problems, many of

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

them identical with those of England, but many others, of course, peculiar to Africa.

During those first years I wrote many articles to the Press. I knew that things were not going right in the matter of land and also in the matter of labour. I thought at the time that these were just teething troubles after a war which had brought new ideas into Africa and carried many African troops to different parts of the world. In the matter of farming I was always hammering away at the need for more control of breeding diseases, and though matters moved slowly, it may now be said that there is far less disease in European herds than at any previous time owing largely to farmers becoming scared of infection, to their using pessaries after calving, and to the arrival of private practitioners who have helped farmers enormously. Nowadays no reputable sale will take place without a certificate of cleanliness, and this has made it imperative that diseased cattle are slaughtered, as a seller knows that it is unsaleable. My second attack was upon the stranglehold on land by big landholders. This was resented strongly, and I was even threatened, but my words did not fall upon stony ground, for there has been a great move to subdivide big farms, and now that much of the country has been taken up by new settlers the only land available is that which has been bought from the big landowners and split up into economical units for new farmers. My contention was that unless we filled the land and made full use of it, then the black tide would surely rise and at its flow it would swamp the white highlands of Kenya. How true this is can be seen by a study of the Royal Commission Report of 1955, and how near we were to being swamped by the black tide is evident when one considers how easily the Mau Mau rebellion could have succeeded had its leaders and its rank and file been rather less confident of success in the early times, and had they had an organisation for carrying out their plans as efficiently as their methods of disseminating their instructions. Little did I

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

realise the true state of affairs at the time of writing those warnings in the Press. I prophesied a native rising, but not on the scale of the Mau Mau. I quoted the lines of Housman, "The signal fires of warning, they blaze but none regard," and I was laughed at for my pains, for people said that it could not happen here, and very soon it did happen, and with many tragedies.

My third contention was that we were robbing the land. I wrote that within twenty-five years the fertility of Kenya would have so dropped as to create famine conditions. I cannot claim that a few articles in the Press had a great effect, but, like political propaganda, if a thing is repeated often enough it does eventually sink in, and in this crusade of mine I did precede many reforms : such as it being made illegal to burn straw on stubbles, and the enforcement of terracing on steep slopes. Small things in the midst of greater problems of developing a country but not less important for all that. It was a matter of getting public opinion to veer over to the idea of conserving for the future. After the war the general attitude tended to be "What's posterity done for me ?" and this led to careless cropping of land in an endeavour to recover from the losses of war. Prices came to our aid, and instead of existing on a margin of profit there was enough and to spare to put back into the land, and as a result farming in Kenya has progressed beyond all expectation.

I was once travelling and climbing in the Alps near Chamounix. We were traversing what is known as the "high level route" to Zermatt, and I was alone with a guide. One day as we passed down from the snows I noticed an old woman in the traditional black dress of the Swiss peasant, trudging up a steep field with a basket on her back, and behind a stone wall a girl shovelling something into another basket. When she reached the top the old woman tipped the contents of her basket on to the ground and returned down the hill.

"What is that old woman carrying ?" I asked of my guide.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

"She is returning silt which has been carried down by the rain to the top of the field so that it can be used again," he answered.

"But why not cart manure?" I queried, and he replied, "Because that silt represents the work of ten generations who have carted manure to that field, and a man may not rob the past or the future will suffer. Land is scarce in these hills and men must work to keep it in good heart."

That conversation took place in 1925 and I was at the time at an agricultural college, but nobody knew anything of erosion in those days, and even the Oxford Dictionary of that date carries no reference to erosion other than that of acids. That woman, bent to her toil, that she and her daughter might live, was reaping that which she had sown in the full knowledge that there can be no evasion of the natural laws, and that, at least in her lifetime, her wealth lay in the labouring earth of which she was but the caretaker during her lifetime. How different it is in Kenya where a man can still wear out a piece of land and move on to pastures new. This practice will inevitably come to an end, and the time is not so far ahead in the African reserves when there will be famine unless the cultivators will listen to the now insistent instructions of the European officers whose job it is to induce the peoples to better methods. The high prices being offered for maize and other cash-crops is bedevilling the situation because the African sees a quick return and will not rest his land, and in fact even tries to get two crops off it in the year.

Our cows thrived on the new grasslands, full of untapped trace elements, but I was warned by an old settler that after a period of stocking the quality of the cattle would go down and the quantity of their produce also fall unless I practise heavy culling from the outset. So I determined never to exceed the capacity of the land, and in fact I have remained understocked now for many years, and as a result I have never found any cause to worry on the condition of my stock, The

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

one thing which can so overtake one in Africa is that "horn and tail" look which denotes some deficiency and which is so noticeable amongst native cattle in areas where salt licks are non-existent. These salt licks may not contain salt, but there are some traces of minerals which the cattle thrive on, and in the Nandi country, at a salt lick called "Chaimim," the soda-impregnated liquid which comes out of wells is lifted and placed in troughs for the cattle to drink from. When a herd leaves the pan they can hardly walk, so much liquid have they drunk, and the Nandi reckon that this dosage is sufficient for a month.

These Hamites have made some curious discoveries in the matter of their cattle, and for the most part they are good herdsman even if they know little about medicine. Most of their reasoning is of the "post hoc" variety and they will never sort out cause and effect. As an instance of this, my dry herdsman recently rushed in to say that a ground hornbill had settled on his hut and that I must send boys down immediately to build him a new house. It appears that the Kipsigis believe that when a hornbill settles on a hut someone will die very soon after. A hornbill lives in open country and will often settle on a branch of a lonely tree or on the roof of a hut if it is the only thing in sight. So I suppose one day someone died soon after a bird settled on the roof and the superstition clung to the bird ever since. I pointed out to the herdsman that he was asking rather a tall order, but he was adamant and threatened to leave if I did not take immediate action.

In the early days these nomadic stockmen used to draw off the blood of their beasts by opening the jugular vein. This they mixed with milk and drank. I suppose that it sometimes happened that a cow so treated was suffering from Redwater, and that by transferring the blood-covered knife to a susceptible cow the second recipient was in fact inoculated with a serum of the disease and this in turn rendered it immune.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

These stockmen noticed such things, and this is especially so with the Masai, who inoculated against Rinderpest, and so it may be claimed that these Hamitic peoples practised this form of medicine long before the time of Pasteur, and in fact may have brought the idea down with them from Egypt. Another common practice is to wave a flaming brand under a cow's belly when it is suffering from Hoven or Bloat. This "cure," though useless, had its counterpart in the "need-fire" of the European peasant which he used for the cure of "murrain." It was last used in Scotland, according to Fraser's *Golden Bough*, in 1830, and the interesting point is that this fire had to be lit with fire-sticks, and this same prerequisite also holds with the Kipsigis and Masai. It just goes to show that primitive peoples all over the world have certain customs in common!

There can be no end to the interest which lies in the building up of a herd, and all my work was directed towards creating something for my sons to take over as soon as they were ready. This accursed Emergency has robbed me of both my sons, and whilst one is a district officer leading tribal police in the Kikuyu Reserve, the other is serving in the Kenya Regiment. After two years they will have to take a training, and this will apply to the elder one, but my youngest has decided that farming is not to his liking and so he has been apprenticed to a sawmill, and has been logging in the forests, and after his service he will return to the milling trade where it seems that his heart lies.

Whether the elder son will return to Africa from his agricultural training in England is a moot point, and perhaps my hopes are vain for the future, but everything points to a future for Kenya if only we can resolve the racial question, though to me this question is so simple that it can be solved by firm rule for the good of all, but in these days there are some very odd ideas in full currency and one can only shake one's head and hope that lunatics will not impose their will on the country.



OX PLOUGHING



DOROBO WOMAN

6

"And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not."

Merchant of Venice I, 3.

I BELIEVE that I am right in saying that the English farmer under present conditions in England can count his chickens *before* they are hatched. I have never farmed in England, but I read a farming weekly in which A. G. Street makes a contribution, and judging by the way he conducts his affairs I can see quite plainly that so long as a farmer abides by certain principles of husbandry there can be little doubt that he will emerge on the credit side, given the right weather. Wherever men turn over the soil they have to contend with this one unknown factor, and in Africa there is added the unpredictable length of killing droughts, and at the other extreme, periods of incessant rains and floods which erode the land as fiercely as the winds of the dry months. Seldom do we encounter a happy medium, and so the farmer is faced with the need to terrace every exposed acre against the possibility of a storm of three inches in half an hour, or he must lay in fodder against the seven months of drought which might any year hit him. Breaking new land in Africa is like ravishing a virgin, no sooner done than your troubles begin, but this in no way deters men from marrying themselves to the land which they know for a fickle mistress.

It is an interesting fact that throughout the history of Kenya the man who has survived economic depressions and climatic setbacks has been the cattle farmer. There is nothing in stock-raising of those spectacular profits which every now and then come to the wheat farmer, the coffee planter, or the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

tea and sisal growers, but over the years the stockman can build up his herd, sell his butter-fat, and draft his surplus cattle to the saleyard without having to speculate ; because his market is a stable one and his land, instead of being slowly flogged by loss of fertility, is building up a capital reserve in the form of feeding-stuffs.

The future of Africa is the golden hoof, though it must also be remembered that the law of diminishing returns descends like an avalanche once the carrying capacity of the pastures has been overstepped. In the next chapter I shall deal with this problem of the difficulties of pasture improvement due to soil temperatures, and let me say here that the sparse growth of imported grass mixtures, though strongly advocated in some quarters, are only economic if subsidised by the profits of pyrethrum, a crop which will survive only so long as plentiful woman and child labour is available, and the thin stand of most of these grass leys, combined with the speed with which indigenous grasses encroach, makes ley farming in the high wheat areas a rich man's hobby. This one fact is a limiting factor in the continued growing of wheat in Africa, and this matter of building up the structure of the soil after wheat monoculture is probably the most urgent problem which faces research workers and farmers.

Land prices have risen in Kenya, and those buyers who have the money to take over the wheatlands are being driven to exploiting every available acre, and if you should ask them to describe how they will carry on when their land is exhausted they will say that they are gambling with the hope that in eight years' time the grassland research stations will have discovered the answer in the form of a deep-rooted legume which, with an as yet unknown Sorghum, will carry sufficient stock to rehabilitate the land. The sand is running low, and if a miracle does not happen we shall have, instead of bread, a stone.

The stockman also has his problems. The African has

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

as yet developed little pride in his work and, unless very closely supervised, will reduce a good herd of cows to a liability on the farmer. I say that the stock-farmer can weather economic storms, but he can only achieve this if he is prepared to attend to every detail himself on every day of the year. I have never yet met an African stockman. They are inherently incapable of initiative, and even when told what must be done the work must be inspected immediately or supervised all the time. This is not being derogatory to the African. It is merely a bald statement of fact which nobody can contradict, though in these days of appeasement and welfare such matters are glossed over for fear of arousing racial hatreds. In this book I am not glossing over anything and I am not indifferent, a Laodicean, in the matter of Kenya's future. I should like to shake the African out of his primeval sleep so that he can go forward with us and lose his inferiority complex which can have only one outlet in "nationalism," envy and hatred.

It is my custom to dry off my cows at four months before they calve again, and I know that the usual practice is to give a cow only three months before her next lactation. The cause for this difference will astound any English stockman who may read these pages. It is because I know that the herdsman who cares for my dry herd, instead of allowing a cow sent to him from the milking herd to dry up, will milk and sell the milk for anything up to a month after the transfer. Great precautions are taken, guards posted and the milking is done either before dawn or after sunset. If he is caught he will indignantly give notice and walk out within half an hour so that the farmer is left in real difficulties and therefore is forced to allow for this wastage in his cattle management. Add to this loss the fact that unless records are kept daily and a close check kept on yields, no milker will extract the strippings from a cow, and thereby the lactation is probably reduced by eighty days. I should say that the average lactation in Kenya is in the region of 200 days. My average is 250 days, and the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

average for my herd is in the region of 500 gallons. That is the approximate figure for eighty cows in milk, and of course with smaller herds where closer supervision is possible these averages are higher. As a result of this one factor, when I buy from a large herd I do not expect to get the records which are shown for a small herd. For years my wife and I stood over and recorded every cow, fed every calf, and watched every drop of milk go through the separator. This paid us dividends to the extent of 25 per cent. of our takings, and now, with age and ill-health, we have had to relax and the result is glaringly evident.

I still only lose 2 per cent. of my calves, and I rear sixty heifers each year, but I only achieve that by being at the milking during the time they are fed. Any falling off of this vital supervision and the milk is stolen in specially hidden receptacles and the calves will literally starve, and those that survive will fall victim to the many scour diseases such as coccidiosis, white scour, and the rest. I could give many other instances of the care needed to guide the African towards some form of responsibility and away from his ingrained indifference to the care of property, of animals, or of anything which is not directly concerned with his own survival. This is not a fault, and I do not write of it here as such, but it is all part of the "white man's burden" and must be accepted as such by all those who make their home in black Africa.

The inertia of Africa is at once one of its most fascinating and maddening qualities. When a black man comes face to face with a difficulty his first reaction is to withdraw from it or to discover some means of by-passing it. He has learnt by savage experience that all the forces of evil can, for some unknown reason, be ranged against him and that only propitiation can avert disaster. He will search for signs in the guts of a goat, or he will take a purge; he will seek out amulets or shave his head, and he will speak of "It" by another name, and in the last resort will become possessed of the devil and

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

disappear from the scene like an animal seeking seclusion before death. The unprintable horrors of the Mau Mau oaths are merely the primitive form of sexual aberrations which we are told exist in all the cities of Europe. It is even suggested that they derive from the same source as the sacrificial practices of early civilisations, but the Petoona Oath of the Mau Mau also derives from phallic depravity and cannibalism.

These are some of the human imponderables against which the farmer is helpless because of their secrecy, and because of the utter absence of logic in witchcraft and magic. The Western mind can go so far, but then there appears a wall of fear and silence beyond which it is impossible to penetrate because there is no demarcation between cause and effect.

Agriculture in Africa has advanced by a process of elimination. The early settlers of Kenya, with only their experience of English farming, suffered crippling losses from causes which could only be discovered after many years of scientific research. The trials and tribulations of Lord Delamere's first experiments with wheat ; his losses of cattle and sheep before the control of the tick ; the pining of cattle in the Rift Valley through the deficiency, discovered many years later, of cobalt, and the terrible depletion of both game and domesticated animals when the plague, or Rinderpest, swept through the land, make us farmers of half a century later realise the great strides made by science in the opening up of Africa. Rust-resistant wheat are now to be had in numbers. East Coast Fever, Anaplasmosis, and Redwater can be controlled by arsenical or Gammexane dips. The compulsory inoculation of cattle in the native reserves, often in the face of bitter opposition, has reduced Rinderpest to a minimum and saved untold lives of wild animals. Foot-and-Mouth, until recently, has spasmodically raged and burnt itself out, but now a serum is flown direct from Holland and we see the end of this menace in sight. East Coast Fever, a virus disease, still takes a heavy

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

toll wherever the infected tick is allowed to live, and with all these modern remedies, with the Sulpha drugs for scours and udder infections; Penicillin for lung troubles and sepsis, we are reducing mortality to a point where the land can no longer carry the stock population, and where erosion by the cloven hoof is hastening the day of human famine.

This is but one aspect of the problem of Africa, and I have not touched on the human problem which, like some great monster, is stirring its limbs and seeking its freedom from the bondage of Western civilisation. It might have been better to have never awakened this leviathan of "nationalism," for, should it succeed in breaking its bonds, it will sink back into the slough from which it has emerged.

During the first years of trial I tried many sidelines. I imported two types of oil-producing plants from Switzerland. I worked on the assumption that as pyrethrum had been imported from Dalmatia, and as it had proved a huge success, it might be that in the mountainous areas of Europe another profitable plant might prove itself in the highlands of Africa. So I planted experimental plots of "Pavot," a narcotic poppy with an oil content of 40 per cent., and "Kolza," the Kale Oil plant whose extract is also used as a cooking oil throughout the continent. The poppies grew six feet high in forest soil and had capsules as large as golf-balls and the Kale grew as well as any that I saw in Europe, but hordes of small waxbills, finches, and seedeaters descended upon my plots, and though I waged an incessant war my plants were stripped so that I was only able to save my original weight of seed, and I turned away in disgust.

Pests are the lot of the farmer in Africa. At one time it was only possible to plant bearded wheat because of the sudden increase of the widow-bird, and only recently the countless millions of quelea have almost stripped the wheat areas on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. In 1953 the greenfly attacked wheat in the Rift Valley and army-worm makes its

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

appearance from time to time and then is not seen for many years. During the Abyssinian campaign I remember crossing the River Juba at Gelib and encountering a moving mass of woodlice which stretched for sixty miles, and were moving towards the sea. We slept a night at Brava and here they were piling up against the sandhills, which they could not climb, though no doubt they eventually surmounted the obstacle and entered the Indian Ocean.

Locusts come and go with biblical accuracy and the most puzzling fact of their migration is that it occurs just previous to a drought year in Kenya, which would seem to point to certain climatic factors which lead up to a failure of the monsoon. If science could discover the cause, whether solar or isobaric, it could also discover a means of forecasting climatic variations. Here, again, modern insecticides have come to the aid of the agriculturalist and an escaped swarm of locusts is the exception rather than the rule, but the cost can only be borne on an international basis, and the first requirement is the co-operation of the countries wherein lie the breeding grounds, and though the Abyssinians give free access to their country, this cannot be said for the Arabs who seem to resent intrusion into central Arabia.

Life fluctuates in Africa, and that is why "thrif is blessing," as I headed this chapter. Farming in Europe holds a more even keel so that a man can calculate with some measure of certainty as to what the seasons will bring. Against this security the average interest on outlay may be lower if more secure, and in Africa the profits may soar one year and sink the next, so that a man must look for greater rewards to justify his venture, and who will grudge us our good times when we cannot always know what the morrow will bring ?

This chapter is an interpellation within the main story of Dimbilil, and it is intended for the better understanding of those who either do not know Africa or for those many men and women to whom the settler of Kenya is but a remittance

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

man who, having failed at everything else, has come to this country in order to exploit the African to his own profit. To these I must explain that England produces people who have discovered the restrictions of a modern state unbearably irksome, and who have left the shores of their home-country with the one idea of making a new life for themselves with the promise of some adventure and greater opportunity.

We landed in Kenya after the war with £3500 and worked a cattle ranch for eighteen months before our chance came to take up a farm. The European Settlement Board had recently been set up and they had taken over Crown land to split up into farms. Some time later I was allocated this area with some modifications as to forest boundaries, and I was able to apply to the Board for assistance. The agreement had been that the Board were prepared to finance all permanent fixed assets, but that the tenant could build anything at his own expense with the permission of the district agent. I have told how we built a house for one hundred pounds, and all we required of the Settlement authorities was the money to construct a dip for £250, a thousand feet of 1½" piping, sixty rolls of barbed wire, a thousand running feet of timber cut with pit saws in the forest on the farm, and some assistance to build three and a half miles of road to connect the farm with the nearest road of access. Knowing that I should not make any money during the first year I budgeted for two years, as I knew that I should not be able to purchase all the cattle I required during the first year. My war gratuity had purchased my first car, and as this proved inadequate I resold it for a substantial profit, added £300, and bought a new 15 cwt. truck. I then set out to buy stock, and over a period I accumulated 175 cows, heifers in calf, and empty heifers, and for these I paid an average of £15 each, which at that time was a reasonable figure. At least twenty of these, however, had to be sold to the butcher for various reasons, and most of them, having fattened on our new pasture, left the farm for a profit

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and thus helped to swell the takings during our second year of work.

The first year we lived and educated our three children on £600, and this money was loaned to me by my wife from her own savings, and with other monies was refunded at a later date. I mention this so as to emphasise the part which a woman plays in the venture of starting in Africa. If she is prepared to get down to a job of work and also to keep the home together whilst her man is occupied building up the farm, the chances of success are so increased as to make the future merely a matter of hard work and cautious spending. Including bulls, I spent in the region of £3000 on cattle and I was able to get one hundred Romney ewes at thirty shillings each, and as these very soon brought in a wool cheque, and with the ever-mounting return from cream each month, we ended the second year with a profit of £800. Our labour force remained constant at twenty to twenty-five adults, of which six herded the various herds of cattle, two were ox-drivers, eight were milkers and odd-job men, whilst the remainder worked on the land at forest clearing, planting the crops and weeding the fields in the season of weed growth. These cost £500 a year and this figure was about one-third of the cost of running the farm and of course includes their daily ration, which is given free. We therefore had to find £1500 in the first year for the running of the farm, and we scraped through with a profit of fifty shillings, having run the farm with no running capital other than the returns from the cows, the sheep, and a substantial acreage of potatoes, cauliflower, and other high-priced horticultural produce which we grew as a cash-crop in the newly cleared orchard. With unceasing supervision and work we reared over one hundred calves, and at the end of two years we sold forty store bullocks at varying ages from yearlings to twenty months, and from that time, and with eight acres of pyrethrum in full bearing, we were able to forge ahead.

Before proceeding with the story I anticipate some years

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

to 1954 when the profits rose to £2500 without deducting income tax. The Capital Account stands at £7150 and the stock is valued at £5112 after heavy culling. The Settlement Board loan is £4650, which of course includes the value of the land and on which I have to pay $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest. These figures are given because they are an important part of the story of this farm in its making, and it is especially important as it gives figures with which to compare the workings of an English farm, and as this story is told for the purpose of giving a complete picture of our lives on the land in Kenya, I have not held back this more personal, financial aspect, because it probably has the greatest influence in either persuading or deterring new settlers from England.

I owe these figures to the European Settlement Board of Kenya. It is wholly due to them that I am now prosperous and I can therefore best show my gratitude by furthering the cause of British settlement in Africa. On this account I excuse myself for this long digression, and I resume the story of the farm in the knowledge that nothing has been withheld.

“ Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.”

Isaiah 24, v. 1.

I HAVE often pondered this saying and all that it implies. It is, I think, one of the most profound indictments on human greed and on the erosion which closely follows the exploitation of the land. The truth of the statement lies in the fact that the plough begets greater populations and with the increase more land must go under the plough, until at last the cover of the land is so reduced and the run-off so increased that the desert creeps in and killing famines destroy a whole civilisation. Deserts have been proved to be man-made, and one has only to examine the archæological horizons of any excavations in desert countries to be convinced that this is true.

In Kenya recently the emphasis has shifted from subsistence farming in the African land units, to cash-crop farming, and with this we shall see a decline in fertility, a breaking-up of the crumb structure of the soil, and a movement towards dust-bowl conditions. The Tana River rises in the Kikuyu country and already those who live near its mouth report that each year the sea is stained farther and farther out with the silt that has been washed down from the highlands. Deltas are forming and the river continually changes its course, and, in fact, we are now witnessing, in a smaller way, a repetition of the Great Flood of Noah, where exactly the same thing happened to the Sumerian city states when the Elamites increased and denuded the hinterland.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Malthus contended that whereas the population increases in geometric progression, food increases in arithmetic progression only. Science now stoutly denies this argument, but science is so upsetting the balance of nature in the field of medicine that I am convinced that Malthus is more right now than he was in 1798. In other words, the world is faced with the most killing famines in the near future, whilst science is assuring us that it will be possible by nuclear research to discover a means of filling men's bellies. Vogt has pointed out that survival is based on the simple equation which he evaluates in the form: $C=B:E$, where C is the carrying capacity of the land, B is the production from that land, and E is the climate, the soil, and such additional data as the soil's propensity to erode, hence its vegetative cover or its stocking capacity, both human and animal. It is therefore plain that the carrying capacity of the soil is the ratio between B and E. We have already seen the man-made deserts of Kenya both in the Kamba country and in the Kamasia Reserve near Lake Baringo, and though the answer is simple, nothing is being done. Relieve the pressure on the land, exterminate the goat, and you are half-way to solving the problem. The trouble lies in the fact that the African for the most part (excluding the Nandi) will not co-operate, and refuse to do without such things as goats, which they look upon as currency for the purchase of wives. Gregory in 1893 spoke of the Kamasia country being so choked with long grass that the porters made slow progress, and later, when he was approaching Machakos on his return journey, he said of that area: "Machakos certainly offers better prospects for European settlement than any other district that I saw in eastern Africa . . . the country is one of the richest and most fertile in British East Africa." It is now so eroded that parts of it may be termed semi-desert, and this area is having every modern device applied for the restoration of fertility.

There can be little doubt that regeneration through natural

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

process of rest is the only effective method of bringing land back to heart on this vast scale. Land must be fenced off and left, and all the palliative methods of modern science are remedial but not preventative, and surely this latter means is the only lasting way to health or to fertility? In Africa, with its sun and rain, the soil tends to follow the law of diminishing returns, which is in inverse ratio to the stocking or the cropping per acre, and this ratio is regulated by temperature of the soil and also by weathering and run-off. I have seen land which was heavily stocked for twenty-five years produce three crops of wheat and then have to be fallowed. The fact was, that owing to overstocking during that grazing period, the grass was never allowed to grow coarse and therefore the soil temperature was always high, and when this takes place even the droppings of cattle over generations have no effect whatsoever on fertility because nothing is introduced, but slow combustion removes something which would remain if the land were left alone. On the other hand, the plateau of the Molo district has ridges where the land has been at some time so heavily stocked that it is good wheatland. We call this "Manyatta" land and it was obviously once the "bomas" or paddocks of huge herds of Sirikwa and later Masai cattle. Here the cattle trampled the soil at night and concentrated the manure so that it formed a fertile structure which has remained. This loss of fertility through the sun's rays can be seen at work if one remains in one place for long enough. On this farm there are a number of old cattle "bomas" which were used for a very short time. Each year as I tramp round the farm I see these patches of Kikuyu grass becoming more and more encroached by coarser grasses, and the cattle will graze them low all through the year as they prefer the sweet Kikuyu to the oatgrass. Being short, the temperature rises and fertility falls. The act of burning grass is, of course, known to encourage coarse grass and to discourage those which require richer soil. This system of burning is recommended for the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

control of a grass widely known as the African "foxtail," though it is no relation to the English species.

Whilst I have been at Dimbilil I have cleared a number of acres of forest, and I have been appalled at the speed with which the crumb of this loam is reduced to a red dust in place of its original spongy crumb. I have grown onions, which are light feeders, and I plant about three crops running before having to move on unless I manure at the rate of ten tons to the acre. Fertilisers will keep the crop going for a year or two longer, but I never thrash my land by this system except for oats, and then the milking bails follow on to the stubble, and the supers that I use are merely to make the roots feed quicker in the cold wet months of first growth. The real solution is to concentrate cattle heavily and then to move on, but the dung must be applied at the rate of 100 beasts per acre for a month, paddocked at night only, to do any lasting good, and the only way to judge the good that has been done is to note whether the land reverts to bush after application and whether certain known plants which indicate forest infringement are present. African forest follow a very defined cycle, and especially in the early part of this cycle is it possible to assess the age of a forest. People will tell you that where nettles grow in the highlands the land is rich. This is very true, but if those nettles are grazed down regularly by cattle in the dry season when their sting leaves them, after a number of years the raised temperature will begin to show in a marked falling off of growth. I verily believe that this matter of temperature will one day be found to be the key to agriculture in tropical Africa. The use of phosphates is widespread, and the advocates of this system have every reason to recommend them, but there is a tendency to overlook the fact that these fertilisers are applied to a soil which is, in fact, a mere matrix, and that this does not build up fertility: There is no getting away from the fact that without nitrogen we can neither build up fertility nor, in the form of protein, will a beast thrive.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

We have much to be grateful for to the experts whose research into agriculture in Kenya has made farming possible in Africa, but every now and then one comes up against a blind spot in their research which nothing will rectify. One of these is their insistence that the future of "Ley" farming at high altitudes (over 8000 ft.) lies in English grasses. They seem incapable of seeing that worn-out wheatland will not even grow indigenous grasses until it has been dunged, and therefore to suppose that the grass will grow before the manure is a fallacy. Before any results can be obtained from cocksfoot or ryegrass it is necessary not only to graze sheep in large numbers, but also to paddock them at night all over the area intended for the ley, and then against this is the economic factor of £8 per acre cost to put a field to grass, and this is prohibitive in this country where a bullock only fetches £35 at the outside. Once the sheep have been concentrated the indigenous Kikuyu grass soon takes charge, so that within two years the ley is devoid of imported grasses and is wholly Kikuyu grass. This, of course, makes the cost of the ley uneconomical. The great need is firstly to eliminate the tick by compulsory dipping, as has been done in South Africa, and then to fence. This will increase the cattle and the sheep populations and make ley farming a reality.

From small beginnings, with three ounces of seed, we built up a trade in onions which has reached ten tons. With the heavy transport bill this must be a limit, for in Africa the roads can be a limiting factor which introduce a law of diminishing returns for the farmer and another rising law for the garage owner. Two weekly trips to the station are a necessity in order to get the cream delivered, and once this is overstepped one's cost in repairs begins to rise steeply. In the growing of onions there is little latitude for error, and only if a system is adhered to will success come your way. I have had to raise the seedlings in beds and then transplant, and unlike other countries there can be no harvesting of bulbs in the field for

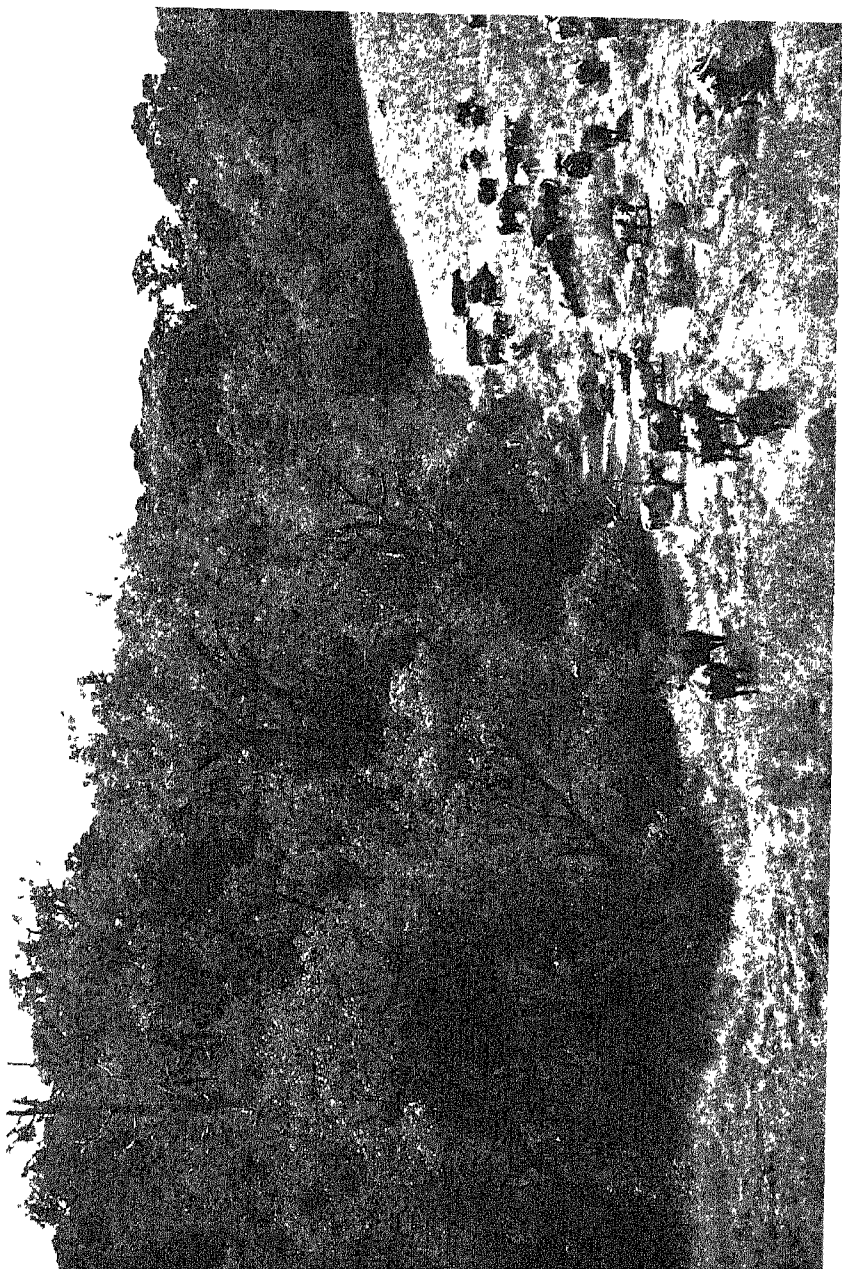
Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

the following year. New seed must be bought each year and the whole crop is sold.

Pyrethrum is the only crop which I grow purely in order to make money. There can be no pleasure derived from this crop even though it is simple, given a drier and the labour to weed it and to pick the blossom. It is also an unpopular crop because of the labour troubles it brings on owing to the fact that one is largely dependent on women, who are always looking for some trouble. Before the Emergency the Kikuyu tribe had a stranglehold on the crop as, being acquisitive, they would turn out to pick or to weed very willingly. With their removal at the outbreak of the rebellion, farmers found themselves in grave difficulties. The Government pressed for greater acreages as this insecticide is a dollar earner, but the farmer could not handle the crop for lack of hands, and machines cannot as yet pick daisies. My drier was a home-made affair with two bays to hold twenty-four trays and, six feet below, two forty-gallon drums acting as a flue from the fireplace, situated outside and away from the building. Fire, of course, is the main enemy, and I built an expansion chamber of cut stone between the firebox and the flue. I thought it was safe, and proved to be so, but when the Mau Mau burnt my drier down twice in ten days I was extremely puzzled even though arson was established at the second burning.

I must not complain, though, because I have done well out of the crop, and there is little doubt that more farmers have got themselves out of debt through the returns from pyrethrum than from any other crop grown for profit.

Our orchard required bees in order to fertilise the blossom and so I decided to place two boxes in the trees near the garden. I called in an old Dorobo whom I sent up the tree. The hive was hauled by a rope into position, and when he had placed it he came down and looked at me in a curious way and said, "Aren't you going to call the bees?" and he explained that it might be months before they came if I failed to take



WATERING IN THE KIPSONOI



ARMED CATTLE-HERDS

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

this precaution. I took his remark lightly but soon I did notice that nothing happened about a swarm arriving, so I called the old fellow and told him to get on with his mumbo-jumbo. He went up the tree and he turned to each point of the compass calling upon the bees to visit the box, which he called a happy home ; he rapped out a tattoo and chanted, and he produced something from an old bag, and when he had finished he came down full of assurance and informed me that the bees had heard and that they would come.

I then looked up my Virgil, and in the Georgics I read :

“ Then melfoil beat, and honeysuckles pound ;
With these alluring savours strew the ground ;
And mix with tinkling brass and cymbal's droning sound
Straight from their ancient cells, recalled from air,
The reconciled deserters will repair.”

The bees came, and a year later the Dorobo called back to tell me that he had better inspect the hive that evening so as to see whether there was any honey. Whilst he was working with his smoke brand, made from twisted lianas, I called to him so as to ask how he was getting on. All I got for answer was a grunt, and I discovered later that a man who is taking honey will not speak, and I suppose this is because he might get stung on the tongue, or maybe there is some taboo attached to the ceremonial of honey. The honey harvest of the forest comes in cycles, like everything else in Nature, and the peak of this cycle is every seven years when a certain plant called “setyot,” which has no botanical name, flowers in profusion in the forest, and this also coincides with a wet year. It is a plant which grows six feet high and totally covers the forest floor. From these flowers comes the limpid honey which has no equal anywhere in my experience—a real nectar with an intoxicating aroma. At this season, too, the Dorobo pay especial attention to the honey-guide whose incessant notes call the passer-by to a hive. The Dorobo aver that, should a

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

hunter take a hive and fail to leave some comb and grubs for the bird, this will result in the next passer-by being led, not to a hive, but into the midst of a herd of elephant or buffalo.

There is a folklore among these people which will soon be lost or forgotten with the onslaught of civilisation. It is often difficult to get to know this lore as the people are reticent to a stranger whom they suspect of laughing at them. I once shot a tinker barbet and a Dorobo who was with me looked at it and remarked, "Where the droppings of this bird fall on a bough, there the mistletoe will grow." This fact I confirmed with the curator of the Coryndon Museum, and he assured me that this bird's main diet was the mistletoe berry. I have been out hunting leopard, and whilst walking down a glade an augur buzzard has left its perch where it was sitting on the left of our line of approach. The hunters turned in disgust, saying that the hunt would fail as the omens were bad. Had the buzzard been on the right, showing its white breast, then all would have been well. This same applies to the call of the woodpecker whose strident call on the left hand augurs ill for a journey. In the early days of war parties this was of special significance, though now this bird is not accounted as reliable. As an interesting sidelight on the augur buzzard, the fat of its body, if rubbed into the eyes, is said to restore failing sight!

Could we but enter into and study the make-belief world of these peoples we should have access to the bedrock of human beliefs and superstitions, for these peoples may be classed with the bushmen, who link with the prehistoric and possibly Chellean inhabitants of Africa, before even the arrival of the Bantu. Their lore is fast being overlaid by the matter-of-fact disillusionment of the younger men whose contacts with civilisation and whose wits have been filled with the marvels of mirrors and tractors, so that they look down on the elders with scorn because they still cling to their shibboleths. The fact remains that for all this veneer of Western ideas, the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

younger generation have lost far more than they have gained from us, and they are adrift without beliefs and without the traditions which held the tribe together. With the loss of interest in these beliefs they have lost that knowledge of the natural order from which has sprung every aspect of their social life.

The Dorobo still cling to their traditional folk-ceremonies with a regularity which often forces me to modify the work on the farm, and I do this willingly because I am convinced that so long as these survive, so long will the Dorobo survive in Africa. The African must have an outlet for laughter and dance, and he derives his main happiness from these elaborate events when they can dance and sing with the girls, or in attending the more serious "Ngomas," they celebrate the circumcision of age-groups and the initiation into the warriorship of the tribe. In many tribes the ceremonies are dying out, and more's the pity, for with their disappearance comes little or nothing but the vague fumes of agitators who find work for idle and discontented hands. Is not Mau Mau a terrible warning to us? Africa does not want Western ideas, and I was about to say, Christian ideas, but some progress has been made in this direction, even though the modern white man is not exactly a practising Christian except in a few cases, though, on the whole, honest dealing and clean living have more influence on the African than revealed religion.

Somehow or other education has not brought the African all that he looked for. He thought that the three R's would act like Aladdin's lamp and whisk him into another world from that which he lives in. Had he been first taught to use his hands as a craftsman, and had book learning been left to the few, Kenya would have been a happier place for all races, especially for the African.

8

“ Their airy caravan high over seas
Flying, and over lands with mutual wing
Easing their flight.”

MILTON.

THE Great Rift Valley is the greatest bird route in the world. Twice a year huge flocks pass on their way up to Europe and down to the south as far as the Limpopo, on their seasonal migrations, and also, within Africa, there are major movements in various directions, due largely to the desiccation of semi-desert regions, and also in search of seasonal fruits.

During the Abyssinian campaign I was able to study the northerly migration which starts in December and ends in February, and also the southerly flight which is apparent in September. It would appear that most birds, once they have crossed the 6000-foot escarpment at Gondar, take a leisurely course southward, so that at Dimbilil I have heard nightingales singing on 20th September, and every year I have heard the chiff-chaff as it pauses on the farm between 26th January and 12th February. This gives an indication of dates at the equator, though many warblers must pass earlier, as I witnessed at Gondar a congregation of these small migrants feeding on the slopes of the mountain mass of Ras Dascian (4620 metres). At a place called Dancaz we marched across a plateau dotted with rose bushes, and all manners of warblers were in these eight-foot shrubs feeding on the aphids. Looking down from the heights of Culcaber to Lake Tana there was much stir among the waterfowl, and wedges of duck and geese were continually moving northwards. Driving southwards soon

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

after this, past Lake Stephanie, in January, I came on a flock of storks so vast as to fill a whole valley as far as the eye could see, and overhead the air was filled with wheeling birds, but this immense concourse were feeding on a swarm of locusts, and this would account for the numbers.

As soon as the birds reach the approximate area of Lake Rudolf it appears that there is a fanning out, and whilst some flocks of migrants take the western course of the rift by Lakes Albert, Kivu, Tanganyika and Nyasa, the remainder follow the highlands of Kenya where the Rift Valley descends through Naivasha to Lakes Natron and Manyarra. It is interesting to note here that a stork found near my farm was marked in the Vogelgarten, Hambourg, and it was caught in the forest glades at 9000 feet, having injured its wing. Many will remember the observations of Major Jarvis, the Resident of Sinai, when he recorded the fact that the landrail appeared to lead the southward migration of quail. He tells how at dusk he would see the corncrakes rise and circle round, uttering a special call, at which all the quail would rise and fly away southwards. One day recently I picked up a dead corncrake in my pyrethrum, and this coincided with a migration of quail through the farm. These crakes are never seen during the day, but on one occasion I have been woken up at night with one calling its peculiar call on the lawn. Flufftails, too, visit the garden, and their enervating, rasping cry is said by the Dorobo to be the cry of an evil spirit, and my cook asked to be allowed to move his sleeping quarters so as to get away from the "shaitani," as he called it.

The forest pigeon, or olive pigeon (*Stictoenas aquatrix*) flights over the farm from some unknown area each year in September when the olive berries are ripe, and these fruits also attract a parrot, which I cannot identify, but they are very common in these forests during the wet season.

Dimbilil farm lies on the point of contact between the monsoon rains and the convectional rains from Lake Nyanza.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

This creates conditions which have affected both the flora and the fauna, so that it can be said that within one mile of our home, to the eastward, there is a distinct change both in the climate and in the natural fauna. The Mau Forest has as yet never been collected over by naturalists and it is therefore probable that there are species new to science awaiting discovery. That there are birds and mammals which have not been recorded I am certain, for I have either seen them or heard them in the night, and for some years I have been trying to get a specimen of the golden cat, which is said to live in the forest below us, but which is only known from a single pelt which was brought in by a Dorobo. Many years ago I collected a melanistic skin of this cat in the Tinderet Forest farther north from the Mau, but I did not know what it was at the time and the skin was lost.

At one time the Nandi bear, or *keriit*, was common in these forests and was probably reduced by the Sirikwa, or at a later date, by the Masai, in defence of their cattle. The legend is too strong to be ignored, and I have met an old man of the Kablelach age-group who claims to have seen one. This age-group were circumcised in the nineties of last century, and I only know of one man now alive and he must be at least eighty years old, which is a great age for an African. When I first came to Kenya I was offered £1000 by Rothschild for the skin and every bone of a *keriit*, and when living in the Nandi country I was consistently trying to follow up a report of one survivor which was said to roam the area. At last one night, armed with rifles and head torches, a friend and myself came up with a beast and we fired. There was an unearthly scream and a moaning cry, on a descending note, a crashing in the forest, and then a deathly silence. We followed up until midnight and finally lost ourselves. When at last we discovered a native track we arrived at a hut, and on being called, the occupant asked us whether we had killed the *keriit*, as he had heard its cry after the shots. After that

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

incident the stories no longer came in of the animal's depredations, and though it is possible that this was but an oversized forest hyæna, the fact remains that his call was quite different from any hyæna that I have ever heard. One of the earliest settlers in the district described how in 1906 he was sleeping in a hut on the edge of the Timbaroa Forest when he was awakened by this very same call. His dogs cowered under the bed as if it were a leopard, and he was assured the next morning by the Nandi that the keriiit had visited the camp during the night.

In Abyssinia I met a doctor who was trying to catch up with the Sudanese column which was advancing up the foothills into the western approaches of Abyssinia. He came one evening to a village where the population were in a state of excitement as a result of an attack by an unknown beast on the previous night. The animal had carried a man off by the head, and this is the same method of attack as is described by the Nandi. He was warned to be on the lookout as the beast was still about, and he was woken in the early hours as he lay under a tree, to see a hairy-faced animal looking at him. It moved away and shortly after he heard the unearthly cry which I had heard in the Nandi country.

There is every reason to believe that the Nandi bear no longer exists in Kenya, but it would be rash to state that it does not roam the hills to the north of the Karamajong or the foothills of the Abyssinian mountains. It is still possible that this eastern Sudan area holds mysteries which only time will solve, and there are vague stories of prehistoric monsters lying up in the swamps there. The monster of Lake Victoria Nyanza, seen in the early part of the century, has yet to be explained; a new type of crocodile has been discovered in Tanganyika, and in the river below my farm there is a yellow frog which is new to science but which has not yet been collected. One could be certain that during the next few decades there will be more discoveries, and that something new may still come out of Africa.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

One day, whilst riding down a forest glade, my horse pulled up with a jink to one side. I looked for the cause and saw a yawning hole below me, but well disguised by long grass which hung down over the lip. On making enquiries from the Dorobo they stated that a meteorite had buried itself here within folk memory and that the hole was bottomless. I very soon took steps to have the place marked and fenced, and I wondered whether any of my lost animals had fallen down this shaft. I explained how nearly I had been thrown down the hole, but the Dorobo were unimpressed, as they pointed out that everyone knew about this hole and that I should know more about the forest before wandering round without one of them with me.

When we first came to the farm there was a bit of forest which was not used by the natives. Even the cattle were not herded near it, and I was informed that this patch had a bad name as there was a snake about the size of a python which was wont to attack passers-by. This snake was said to have a red throat marking and no authority knew anything of it. I tried to find it and to shoot it, but it was always on the move after monkey, so the Dorobo said, especially the big colobus, and so I never saw it, though on one occasion the herdsman came back to say that my cows had stampeded from a snake which had fallen on one cow's back and caused panic in the herd. It is often difficult to get to the bottom of these stories, because the African invariably mixes up causes and effects. He sees the cows stampede, sees a snake, but does not also see the leopard or smell its putrid breath, which might have been the cause of the alarm.

In September of 1954 I was awakened at three o'clock one morning by the soughing of wings over the orchard. Having never heard this noise before I took a torch and went out into the fruit trees to discover the cause of the disturbance. At one corner of the orchard there is a Mueri tree whose fruits ripen at that season, and on switching on my torch the beam

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

revealed a congregation of bats, with wing-spans of about two feet. They were there in their hundreds, if not thousands, and the whole tree was hanging with them, feasting on the fruit. They must have stayed for two hours, and in the morning there was no sign except that the ground was littered with debris. These were the fruit bat, but though I have shot the odd specimen in the plains I have never seen such a number together, so that I can only presume that they also have their season of migration, when they congregate and follow the ripening of fruits from the lower altitudes to the highest forests.

Sitting in my little office working on this chapter I watched a stir among the birds of the garden, and on looking up into the tree which stands across the orchard I saw the cause of the trouble. A crowned eagle (*Stephenoaetus coronatus*) was sitting on a dead bough with one of its young, quite unconcerned as a pair of augur buzzards stooped at them. Never have I seen this rare eagle at such close quarters, and there is little doubt that it is such happenings which enrichen the life which we lead in this forest home of ours, for on this occasion I was able to train my telephoto camera on to the two birds and get a passable photograph of the incident from my office window.

Probably there is nowhere in the habitable world where so much variety of bird and animal life may be watched, so to speak, on one's very doorstep, and here lies the deep satisfaction of living within the precincts of this great Mau Forest.

The bou-bou shrike (*Laniarius ferrugineus*) is one of the most enchanting birds to live with. We who live in the forest are never long without one of his many calls, and this call is in the form of a duet, for the male bird gives his note on whatever pitch and the hen answers either an octave below or two notes below, and is immediately followed by the cock on his previous note. I have distinguished ten different combinations of notes of two to four in each. In the distance these calls

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

sound like the chiming of bells and that is why the bird is also known as the bellbird or angelus. Before rain these chimes may be heard throughout the forest, and it is often said that to hear the bird means that rain is near, though this is certainly not always so. I have stood under a tree where a shrike is calling and I have whistled to his notes and he has answered me. Thus if he calls "Doh," I answer with "Me," and if I should be slightly flat there is a deadly silence as if his ear is offended and after that nothing will induce him to sing. The timing also is important as the whistles are called in semibreve, which means that the "Me" has to follow quickly or his second "Doh" will clash. Listening to the old birds teaching their brood to sing is just like a human music class. I have seen four youngsters sitting in a row trying out their notes and the parents making a scolding note nearby interspersed with proper tunings.

A dead tree in the garden is the haunt of a little spotted woodpecker (*Campethera cailliantii*) and often we hear the birds "drumming," and I have been able to stand quite close and watch the process. I am aware of the controversy which rages round this subject in England, and I state without any possibility of my being mistaken that the bird drums with its beak and that in the process the head becomes a complete blurr to the eye of the watcher. I just will not argue on this matter as birds are so very tame in Africa, especially small birds, and the facts of this drumming are to be seen by anyone who cares to watch. This matter of tameness in birds is interesting. Youths of many tribes, just before initiation into becoming warriors, are sent out with masks over their heads with a pole attached to the framework of the mask on which they hang their bird trophies. These trophies are a sign of their prowess as hunters and they must achieve their kills with stub-ended arrows only as they are not allowed to use proper arrows until after circumcision. Children are therefore constantly killing small birds, but certain species,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and the woodpecker is one, are protected by reason of their being birds of omen or in some way bound up in the folklore of the tribe. These are strictly protected and therefore become tame in comparison with other birds.

Recently I was photographing one of these protected birds, a longclaw (*Macronyx croceus sharpei*). This bird was very easy to photograph, and though I was only four feet from its nest it would dance in front of the camera barely hidden in a rough hide. The lore on this bird is that when the father of a girl cannot decide between two suitors for his daughter's hand, he will take the two young men out for a walk in line across the plain and when a longclaw is flushed the direction of its flight decides which man is to take the girl's hand. Birds thus play an important part in the lives of many tribes of Africa, and though on the surface one might suppose the African to be callous and uninterested in wild life, the very opposite is true, and so carefully are birds, and animals, observed that they are all named and all have a place in their tribal lore.

The Hamitic peoples have a keen sense of phonology. A great number of birds have purely call-names, by which I mean that their name is an alliteration of their call. In primitive societies this is an easy means to identification, and the close resemblance of the names to the calls is witness to the acute observation of peoples whose lives are near to nature. One of the most striking of these names is that of the glossy ibis, which is known as the "chebage-babā," and this word resembles the call even to the accent on the last syllable, and the same can be said of the local hornbill, which is known as the "Ngangangnet," and has a cry exactly described by that word. Sufficient here to say that francolin, quail, crested crane and plover all have names identical with their calls, and it is probable that at least half the Kipsigis/Nandi names of birds are thus derived. Some animals, too, are named thus, and the one which first comes to mind is the donkey

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

or sigiriet, and the colobus monkey, which is known as the goriot.

The African is addicted to giving nicknames to his own people and especially to strangers who are possessed of peculiarities and this leads to an identification of place-names with persons. I mention this in passing because at one time I studied with interest the publications of the "Place-Name Society" of England, and if the Hamites are anything to go by, nicknames form an essential part of place-names. In the Hamitic languages the prefix "kap" means "the place of," and when linked to a man's nickname it denotes his home. My home is known as "Kapchumbik," or the place where "Chumbik" lives, and my name is derived from the fact that I once rubbed salt (Chumbe) into a man's wounds which was so painful, and also effective, that I am known as the person who rubs in salt. Future philologists will find the derivation of my place-name confusing, to say the least of it, and they will search in vain for its origin. A man called Soames, long since dead, lived at a place now called "Kap-sauce." Sauce is, of course, a mutilated form of Soames, and that name will stick for as long as there are Africans in the area.

Some years ago a plant called the Mexican marigold was accidentally introduced into the colony. This plant has proved an unmitigated nuisance, and has covered huge areas. It is possessed of a vile smell and even taints milk if eaten by a cow. It happened to make its appearance at the time of the last invasion of locusts in 1932, and the Kipsigis maintain that it was brought by the locusts and its name now implies that it is "locust-borne." This reasoning is very typical of the "post hoc" premise of the African.

There are two other matters which concern the Hamites and which I refer to here in this chapter as they are of importance and of interest to archæologists. Some years ago I was exploring a certain part of the Masai lands with a native guide

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

whom I had engaged to show me caves. I was excavating these caves and collecting obsidian arrow- and spear-heads. One day he took me to a cleft in the hills and we entered through a river gorge which soon opened out into a great basin in the hills clothed in forest. On the flank of the southern cliff there was a thirty-foot overhang of rock, and in the shelter thus formed he pointed out a maze of signs painted on the rock. This, it appeared, was the reference-place for all the clan cattle brands of the Masai, and now, many years later, I open the *Illustrated London News* and find that in a cave in France similar signs had been found, but judging by the experts' guesses at their meaning not one of them had an idea of their real significance. Should anyone interested in the French rock drawings read this book let him visit the cave of "Ngapone," near Kajiado, in Kenya, and compare those cattle brands with the brands of prehistoric Cromagnon man.

The second strange find in this respect occurred in Italian Somaliland, near Lugh Ferrandi. I was camped there, and as always happens in such out-of-the-way places, the local Somalis or Galla came to the camp. One of these men was carrying a head-rest and I noticed that it had a curious design on one leg which was faintly familiar. I bought it, and years later, after the war, I was able to identify the design as that on one of the panels of the Whitby Cross. It is fascinating to try to trace the connection between such designs so far apart, and in another chapter I have mentioned the faience beads of the Lake Nyanza plains. I believe I am right in saying that similar beads have been unearthed at St. Just, in Cornwall. The link must lie from the Masai, up the Rift to the Danakil country, and so to a common origin with the Phoenicians who in their time traded with Cornwall for tin, the Cassiteredes of the geographer, Avienus.

I have strayed far from my birds in the forests and glades of Dimbilil, and I return to the subject to describe two matters of interest. Bird territories exist amongst the resident birds

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and, as far as I can observe, not amongst the migrants which nest and then pass on. Eagles, buzzards, and some of the goshawks and small falcons are always on the move as, of course, is the case with the harriers and the kestrels who both have a definite season in Kenya and then return to Europe to breed. Of the garden residents, the bou-bou shrike is the fiercest fighter of trespassers during the nesting season, though territories seem to lapse at other seasons.

When I first came to Africa I found little to interest me in the strange bird-life of the continent, but since the war, when I have lived in the forests of the Mau, I have discovered a fund of interest, and I have taken up the photography of birds with as much, if not more, zest than in youth. There are few times of the year when some birds are not nesting, and this is largely due to the distribution of various foods. For instance, the main hatching of insects is in April and May, whilst the ripening of grass and other seeds is from September to December. Thus I find that there are no birds nesting in the first three months, nor in July when the wet cold weather sets in. During the rains, birds are careful to build their nests facing west, from which direction there is no rain and wind, and this applies to birds of the grassland as well as those which build in shrubs. Recently I have been able to get a series of photographs of the whyder, or widow-bird, dancing in full breeding plumage. These must be a unique series, and during my time in the hide I was able to observe that the cock bird treads the hen between bouts of dancing. Those who do not know this bird can have little idea of the grace with which it dances within its circular dancing ring.

Having now acquired a fair knowledge of the recorded birds, I am always on the lookout for something unknown, and as the Mau Forest has never been collected over, these do turn up from time to time. That there must be more is certain, and I am content that they remain so, because, when familiarity brings with it some measure of contempt we tend

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

to take too much for granted. This is happening in the matter of wild game. Not only do we tend to take it for granted, but we also stand by whilst so-called sportsmen are slowly exterminating the wild life of Africa. It is a terrible indictment on Western civilisation that it must needs allow this slaughter of lovely and harmless animals in their own surroundings, which must be unique in the whole world. This trail of blood and champagne corks must cease before it is too late. Titled nonentities and very important millionaires must be told in no mean terms where they get off, and photographers must be warned that they can no longer have a hunter standing by when animals charge. This shooting of charging animals whilst a Hollywood photographer shoots his film so as to give cinema fans a thrill is a vile form of slaughter. Better that the man either learns to stalk an animal with even odds, or to be trampled if he tempts fate too far. The time is not so far distant when elephant, rhino, and lion will be almost extinct, and this is being brought about in spite of game parks because the African has been quick to realise that the trade in ivory, horns and skins is a profitable one, and the market in India for this ivory and for aphrodisiacs is unlimited.

It is all part of this idea that mankind is progressing. Africa will, I suppose, be exploited so long as Europe continues to raise its standard of living. Asia has revolted against this exploitation, and Africa will also revolt, because oil will not mix with water.

9

“ . . . the morning cometh, and the night.”

Isaiah.

TO live in a world so circumscribed as ours is to find pleasure in small things ; in a garden of flowers when we wake to find that our “ silver chimes ” narcissus has opened in the dawn ; that the jasmine in the tree above the far corner of the lawn is laden with starry flowers which shed their perfume over the garden in the evening, after the shower has passed over. It is a constant delight to meet the graceful bushbuck, sometimes in the orchard or poaching in the vegetable garden. Once a year she has her fawn which she brings as near the house as she dares, with the Border collies about, because she feels, I suppose, that the dogs protect her in an indirect way and keep her enemies at a distance.

In the floodtime of the year I hear, day and night, the sullen roar of the river in spate and I have to warn the herdsmen to keep away from the river which can carry all before it. The land is waterlogged and the ploughs lie idle, though the oxen are kept busy carting stone to keep the road open to the station, for illness must always be kept in mind in these isolated homes and one cannot afford to allow the road to become impassable. Friends seldom venture to see us at this time of the year, though now, with four-wheeled drives and specially built cars, mud and pot-holes no longer offer the problems that they used to do. Roads are for the most part good in Kenya where there is settlement, and even though there is much criticism, I have no fault to find because I can remember the tracks of the early thirties, and they have all disappeared and have been replaced with wide murram or stoned roads.



OLD DOROBO



PYRETHRUM PICKERS

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

To labour with one's hands and to tend daily the animals and plants whose lives are all-important matters in a little world brings its own reward of both contentment and independence. In a world whose keynote is suspicion and envy between peoples it is as well to seek human values within the tasks of a working day. The ravings of Bondareff, the Russian kulak of the last century, have now been realised. He required that every man should do "bread labour," and he predicted that the refusal to work linked with the desire for accumulated wealth by easy ways and methods would bring about bloody revolutions on an unprecedented scale. This accumulation of wealth at the expense of other men's labour has brought about Mau Mau in Kenya, though in our case there are many other factors which have contributed to, and aggravated, the rebellion. Whatever the causes, there has been no escape, and this atavistic return to a revolting past has also all the symptoms of a modern uprising of the dispossessed. In 1950 I wrote in the Press : "In Kenya only the shadows lie across our path. If we could persuade people of the effect of these events (the rising black tide) when they break upon us, we could assure at least some security for our children." Nobody was prepared to listen, and least of all the Government, who had no idea of what impended until the storm broke in 1953.

The African does not want us in Africa, though he certainly wants much that we have brought from Europe. I think, on the whole, he would prefer to revert to his primitive life without the compulsion of Western economy, though he would find the process of readjustment very hard. In spite of books such as *Kenya Before the Dawn*, in which Dr. Wilson gives us gruesome details of primitive life in Africa, in spite of these, we judge the African wrongly, for his reaction to suffering in no way approaches ours. The black man has a philosophy in such matters which must be incomprehensible to us, and after all, the suffering of the Kikuyu in this revolution and his ability to bear with pain has astonished everyone.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

There was no need for astonishment as he can bear far more than we can, and in this he is more like the animal which has been hit by a modern rifle and still can travel for miles without feeling the effects of shock. Wounded gangsters in the forest seldom fall into our hands, even though they die later, because they are not affected by shock for many hours and can continue to move away and evade capture.

Even the slave trade does not have the same impact on people who have no fear of the future, and I might even add that the sufferings of the Kikuyu have been greater during the last three years than many years of sporadic raids by the Arab slave-traders. Now, in this year of grace, women and children are dropping down dead from starvation in their hundreds, and my own son witnesses this almost daily from the fort in which he has to defend the village of the location he is responsible for. What can a youngster of nineteen do when his main job is not to care for the women and children of gangsters, but rather is he busy patrolling and destroying the rebels. These young Kenya-born sons of settlers are doing a magnificent job of work leading the loyal Kikuyu. They are the only ones who can do this work because, being born and bred here, they know the African far better than we do, and for that matter than the men in the imported British battalions. The African sees in these young men something that they have never before found in the white man, an understanding of their problems and withal a firmness which is based on complete understanding of the African mind. We older men are proud of our sons, and with good reason, and I believe that if there is any one thing which will shape the future of Kenya, it is these men who have had to live with, to share hardships and dangers with, the loyals who have rallied to help stamp out Mau Mau.

We had built ourselves a new house of cedar logs split and sawn in the forest. Our growing family could no longer fit into the thatched cottage and so, three years after starting the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

farm, we had built a comfortable log house with shingled roof, and with every modern convenience so as to make us independent of house staff. More and more in Africa it is becoming necessary to do without servants in the house, and it would be as well for people in England to realise that Kenya is not the housewife's paradise it is thought to be. The African does not wish to work, and so the best way is to do without, and more and more women are doing this so that soon there will be a glut of unemployed servants. This insolence started among the Kikuyu who thought that they had the Europeans where they wanted them, and now that very few Kikuyu servants are employed for fear of treachery, the other tribes are trying on a form of blackmail which has greatly increased wages but reduced efficiency.

I had begun to notice that matters were not well with my Kikuyu and I started a propaganda campaign against what was then just known to be a small sect called the Mau Mau. Nothing was known about them, but the authorities warned people to prevent the sect from recruiting further, if this was possible. I warned my labour of the danger of importing it to my farm but did not know that I had intervened in a struggle between my Kikuyu and my Kamba. The latter were holding out against joining and the former were threatening death on those who refused. I was just in time to save the Kamba, but the Kikuyu were the local leaders. At this time I received information that an oath-taking ceremony was to take place in my Kikuyu camp and so I asked the police to come out after dark in order to surprise the meeting and arrest the oath administrators. The police were delayed and they arrived just after the ceremony was over, but the Kikuyu got a fright and they decided to get their own back on me for my impudence. It was also at this time that trouble broke out between the Kikuyu and the Kipsigis, and I suppose that the former had been threatened with exposure during some difference of opinion. One night I was called out to the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

camp as a Kikuyu was said to be dying. I dressed and went down the forest path and found a big log fire and before it the body of a man lying immobile. I examined the man but I could get no reflex action from him though his heart was beating faintly. Sour, ugly looks watched me from the background, and I heartily wished I had brought my revolver with me. I asked the cause of the collapse of this boy and I was told that he had been bewitched by a Kipsigis, and that he would soon be dead. My first reaction was that he would be better dead, and that this was no affair of mine, and that it is best for the white man to keep out of inter-tribal fights. I almost turned to go when curiosity got the better of me and I told the headman to fetch the author of the deed, and I asked him why he was so reticent as to the real cause. When an African has something to hide he can dissemble with aplomb, and I could get nothing out of the men assembled, but a lot of lies. I squatted down on a log and listened to the weird screams of the hyrax and I watched the flares of light in the sky from a forest fire. It was an interminable wait for the Kipsigis to arrive, and when at last he did come I realised that he was in a truculent mood and that the two had come to blows.

However, I was not standing any nonsense either and although I questioned him he would not speak, so I pointed out he would find himself in trouble with the authorities if he did not do something at once and I ordered him to lift the spell. "Saargit," he shouted, let the swine die, but I insisted that the law would take action, though to myself I said that for the life of me I did not know whether a man could hang for bewitching another. After some discussion he agreed to lift the spell, and there followed a scene which beggars description. The Kipsigis started chanting in a low moan which slowly rose to a crescendo of wildest screams. He frothed at the mouth and brought down curses on the man, but appealed to a long dead witchdoctor to revive the man as it was the

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

orders of the "Chumbik" (my native name). He rolled on the ground, striking the earth with a knobkerry and finally he rose to his feet breathing heavily and he stalked out into the night. I turned to look at the body and soon I saw the eyelids twitching and his fingers clenching: he dribbled at the mouth and croaked, and by this time I had had enough and I also walked out of the circle of the fire. A great forest fire was raging to the southward, lit by the Mau Mau as a reprisal against the eviction by the Government from the settlement of Olenguerone, and the low clouds glowed in the dull red light reflected from the flames. By this light I could see my way home and I could hear the bamboos exploding like distant rifle-fire, and had I but known it, it was a foreshadowing of things to come. When I got home I loaded my guns and locked the doors of the house.

Some nights later I was awoken by the sound of crackling fire and on looking out of the window I saw that my pyrethrum drier was ablaze. I rushed out barefooted and tried to save what I could, which was only a few trays, and as there was no water handy I returned to bed cursing the drier boy for being careless. With hired masons and carpenters I set to rebuilding the shell, and within a week I had put in the first fire to raise heat. On the following night I was again awoken to find once again that flames were roaring in the drier, and this time I saved little as I had rebuilt with aluminium sheets, and these had gone up like flares. I called in the police, and arson was established, and we could not trace the culprit even though the Kamba knew very well, but they feared having their throats cut if they spoke. Later a pedigree Jersey bull was poisoned, and once again my cattle drinking troughs were filled with liquid out of the dip. They thought that I was still using an arsenical dip but did not know that I had recently changed to Gammatox. Had they pulled this one off I should have lost my milking herd as the drought was at its height and the troughs were the only water they could get at.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

We had a rude awakening. It seemed that overnight the friendly forest took on a menacing air, and that evil and suspicion stalked abroad. Later, seven days after the Emergency was declared, we heard from a confession that my wife and I were to have been murdered at night. Fortunately all our Kikuyu were imprisoned on the night of 23rd October, and our D-day was to have been 1st November. It is a terrible tale of horror. Women with their unborn babes cut out alive and eaten, old men hacked to pieces, cows with their bellies ripped open and their legs hamstrung; men blinded, with their eyes hanging out and wandering helplessly. These and many more are those horrors of Mau Mau, and yet, still, you will find collection boxes in England for these murderers.

One of the false claims which is put forward by the more vocal section of the Kikuyu tribe is to the effect that we, the Europeans, have occupied their tribal lands. This claim is utterly false and I will not cover the ground here as it has been covered time and again, but the African cannot read the records of the past, or if he can, does not believe them, and prefers to listen to his agitators. In the year 1900 Sir Harry Johnston, who was the Governor of Uganda and Eastern Kenya, wrote of the country from the Limuru escarpment to the Lumbwa district that " . . . there is not a single settled native inhabitant, no one in the shape of a black man but a few wandering hunters. Consequently it would be no act of injustice towards an indigenous population in offering land to the British settler."

I quote this extract so as to refute any statement to the contrary. I do believe that at some future date, if not soon, we should concede land in certain obvious areas adjoining native Land Units, so as to relieve the pressure of population, but this will only be a palliative and it will have to be made quite clear that it does not create a precedent. We settlers neither want guarantees or orders-in-council to make our land

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

tenure secure. The country cannot exist without our agriculture and so we are here to stay as long as we will, but that does not mean that we should refuse to meet the African. Such a compromise as handing over lands would do more to cement our friendship than all the multi-racial talk that afflicts the country.

I can see both sides of this matter ; this vexed question of European domination in Africa. I can see the evils arising out of our exploitation of this untapped land, and I can see into the African's mind very clearly. I know his thoughts so well that my sympathies are with him up to a point, because I also know that nothing can now stem the flow of capital into Kenya for the development of its potential wealth and of its people. Anything else is pure sentimentalism and negro-philism, and the only reality which the African must face is the need for self-help, and the only reality the Government must face is the need to instil self-discipline into the African by insisting that he earns the present "Welfare" which is taken for granted and without payment or thanks. The two words "I want" are to be heard persistently coming from the African and never a mention of "I deserve," nor will he agree to a proposal that he should earn and pay for the amenities of modern progress which he is only too eager to have in a gift, and begins to consider to be his by right. For myself I can see no advancement for the African until he can learn something of character formation, of honesty and of fairness. These qualities are totally absent, and he would be the first to exploit his own people, had he the chance. I am certain that he should be left to go forward at his own pace, and not be pushed on so as to fit him for our economy, for at present he is being forced, and with this forcing he is losing heart and turning on his mentors.

All this talk of multi-racial government is so much eyewash so that the African should be induced to believe that he is taking an important place in the affairs of State. It serves

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

our purpose, and to me it is sheer dishonesty, and in place of all this nonsense that is being talked let us state that we are here to rule for quite a while yet, and then get down to ruling the country. We are paying lip service to the idea and the Press is delighted with this new hobby-horse, whilst the old African plods along miles behind wondering what all the noise is about and asking to be left in peace. These new "stunts" are so typically modern. Who knows, in point of fact, what a multi-racial society looks like? There has never been such a thing in history unless it be that a country has been overrun by force? Where in nature is there such a thing as crossbreeds, unless they be mules? Does Mr. Lyttelton know what this pottage of miscegenation looks like?

Those who acclaim this cliché assert that multi-racial government is not necessarily multi-racial society, but in a country where the majority of blacks to white is five million to forty thousand, there can be little doubt as to what will happen when African representation and a majority is forced on us. I shall be accused of the sin of apartheid, when in fact I am not concerned with names, though I am concerned with survival. In fact, if this multi-racial experiment is forced on us then white civilisation will slowly disappear as surely as the Romans faded out of early Britain.

I have heard all the arguments, and I find them wanting. I am not concerned for anybody but my children, as nothing will change for the next twenty years, but after that, unless we are prepared to rule with a will in place of the present apologetic manner of saying that colonial rule is a back number, there will be the "deluge."

Sir Philip Mitchell in his book, *African Afterthoughts*, has this to say: "There is one thing about the Polynesian Pacific which is of greatest significance, especially for Africa: the relations between the coloured races and the white races . . . there is not only no colour bar or restraint, but no colour consciousness at all. In fact . . . intermarriage is quite

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

common, etc., etc.” The retort to this, of course, is that intermarriage between European and Bantu is criminal because of those who follow, and human experience has proved this to be so, so that such intercourse has been made a criminal offence, and if there is any person, Sir Philip among them, who can openly advocate such a future, then they are more fitted for the madhouse than for human society.

10

“Despise me not for my complexion.”

Merchant of Venice, I, 2.

WHEN I set off for my work in the morning I sometimes see a colobus monkey sitting on the exposed bough of a tree facing the sun. He is quite still except for his head which turns to look, first to the right and then to the left, as he peacefully surveys the scene which lies below him. The bold black and white of his coat and his tail show up in striking contrasts when the first rays of the rising sun slant across the trees, and as I pass I feel his disdainful look; a look of scorn at a mere man who cannot pause to enjoy the dawn of day, but must needs be hastening to work.

So the day starts for me, and it is thus each day of the year because my routine is bound to that of my animals and they will not brook any alteration in their lives. Even the collies are upset if I should not be at my appointed task each day, and so, of a morning, when I reach the milking, the milkers are about to start. Work must proceed steadily as there are eighty cows to be milked by eight o'clock so that the herd can get to the grazing lands before the sun is high. Once the cream is separated I return to the farmyard to give out the feed and to measure the food for the labour. A cart with two oxen goes off to the oats, which is cut green for feed and then to be chaffed at the bails so that it can be mixed in with the concentrates. Tools and nails and anything else required for fencing or mending are then issued, or I must measure Gammatox for the dip, and then all the milkers go off to work until midday.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

The morning is taken up with seeing to the few workers who look after the crop side of the farm. They are Bantu as opposed to the Kipsigis cattlemen, and they are able to wield a hoe whereas the other tribe stoutly refuse to do any such work. There is the pyrethrum to be kept weeded and as I have only a few weeders I only grow eight acres, which I look after carefully so as to get the maximum from a small area. The oat feed has to be planted, and this is simplified as I only plant three acres at a time so as to rotate and to make the haymaking more simple with so few boys to do the work. I do all my seeding broadcast and I have never had any reason to regret it except the year when I used a black Welsh oat which was invisible on the ground and it was impossible to tell where the broadcaster had missed an area. The onions are planted in seed beds at the first rains and thereafter cared for by watering and by hand weeding. On 7th July each year I start planting out, but the area has had to be weeded twice before this so as to have a completely weed-free tilth. During the growing season, as a result of clean weeding, the onions need very little attention and they begin to be harvested in the middle of December and are all off by the end of March. The new year is also the fruit season, for our blossom is in September, and each year we are finding that there is more and more fruit to market, though here, as in England, our main pest is small boys who will crawl through anything to eat green, unripe fruit and then have the cheek to come to the house for something to cure them of gripes. Kale for the cows is a great standby and every year I try to get in a few acres, and some year I alternate with drumhead cabbage, and in the dry weather either of these are invaluable, especially for sick animals who require a palatable feed. The sheep require comparatively little attention so long as the routine of feet-pairing and worm dosing are carried out at regular intervals. Paddocks must be moved away from mud and this may have to be very regular in the wet months. I eventually

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

overcame both the leopard and hyæna menace by making a paddock with twelve barb wires and at the same time this removed the menace of mud.

The imprisonment of my Kikuyu had made it very difficult to carry on the farm, though in the end I was able to pick up a few more men, though at first it threw much extra work on to myself, as I had all the carpentry to do and stonework as well in the construction of troughs. I had to help with the firing of the drier, and also the trays which lie in the sun when the drier is full. These have to be watched and turned and put inside when rain threatens. The oxen had to haul firewood from the forest and do the ploughing and harrowing in the season. Haymaking is done by hand with only an ox mower to cut the crop, but with our climate in December and January there is not much difficulty with the weather, and so a few hands are able to get it turned and carried.

In Africa it is very difficult to make the native realise that all men are not equal. Having no skill himself, he cannot see when one man excels at any task, and will in fact make a point of ensuring that no other man outstrips him. A man who tries to rise above another is a danger to the community, and I suppose this is a remnant of the days when a man who got on and amassed cattle and wives became an oppressor. How many times have I noted and despaired at their refusal to go ahead of the rest, so that always their work is kept back to the lowest common denominator, and perhaps this is why African labour has been described as the most expensive in the world. In California, whereas the sawmillers capitalise each employee to the tune of £10,000 per head, in Africa it is only possible to capitalise at the rate of £200, unless, of course, the farm is highly mechanised, when the figure may be doubled. It can be said that only one man in twenty is capable of improving his position, and some of those are unwilling as they will not accept the responsibility involved. So many things enter into the African's life of which we are

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

unaware. His complicated land tenure is a source of continual litigation and the interminable time it takes the elders to settle a "shauri," or affair, eats into time and makes it imperative for them to be away for anything up to six months in the year. Every act has its ceremonial, propitiations must be carried out, the oracles consulted, and a man's earnings can very soon be swallowed up. All manner of accidents can overtake him, such as a passing woman casting the evil eye, when it is necessary to spend at least three days exorcising the evil.

Behind everything lies the fear of witchcraft, and this fear overrules all other fears. When the first jet planes passed over the Kipsigis Reserve there was consternation, and the witchdoctors decided that the only way to avert disaster was to smear all cows with dung. The white trails left by the planes were believed to be snakes and the dung was a means of removing the evil, for dung is used in snake-bites. In fact, dung has many mystic uses, and there is believed to be some charm in it for it is even used for the healing of wounds, and science is now discovering that it is one of the sources for Vitamin B₃, and scientists are even scraping the stomachs of cows in order to obtain this valuable stimulant. The whole cow is endowed with magic properties and this can be well understood when man's survival is dependent upon her milk, blood or meat; when her skin clothes him, and when her dung can cure him of his ills. A Greek, by name Agatharchides of Cnidus, writing in the second century B.C. describes the Troglodytes, the Hamitic inhabitants of North-east Africa, in the following words:¹ "No living creature is dignified with the title of parent save only the bull and the cow. . . . On that account, their custom was to take their daily food not from their parents, but from their livestock . . .", and he continues to describe many other customs common to the Nandi/Kipsigis peoples.

¹ G. B. W. Huntingford, *The Nandi*.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

We Europeans live our lives in fear of something, whether it be the fear of poverty which goads to work, or fear of pain which makes us study health ; fear of public opinion which makes us behave, or simply fear of dying. To all these things the African is supremely indifferent, especially in face of the last, which is to him merely a part of the process of birth, fruition and decay. There can be no sting in death so long as children survive him, for has he not seen his animals and his plants give increase, and then die ?

There exists a great void between the European mind and the primordial mind of Africa. It is not the first time that two societies have been thrown together with a vast gulf separating them, and the lessons of the past are there for all to see, though few care to study the matter. Africa will not always remain a sleeping monster as recent events in Kenya have shown us, for the time will come, and not so far distant, when his limbs will stir and he will break his bonds. In his *Restoration of the Peasant* Dr. Evelyn Wrench writes thus of the Roman latifundia :

“The revolutionary change from subsistence farming to cash-crop, and from husbandry to the application of a servile manpower undoubtedly increased for a time the monetary value of the produce from the land : but the social value of this temporary increase in the aggregate amount of national income was offset by the concurrent increase of inequality of its distribution, and was more than counteracted by the attendant social evils . . . and the congregation of a pauper proletariat of former peasants in the towns.”

Here we see depicted only too clearly the problems which face us in Kenya, and to my way of thinking the introduction of the costly “Swynnerton Plan” for cash-crops in the Native Units is going to aggravate the social evils still further.

At the present moment very few workers wish to share our standards which have come from this inequality of distribution of wealth, but the time must come when the more able

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

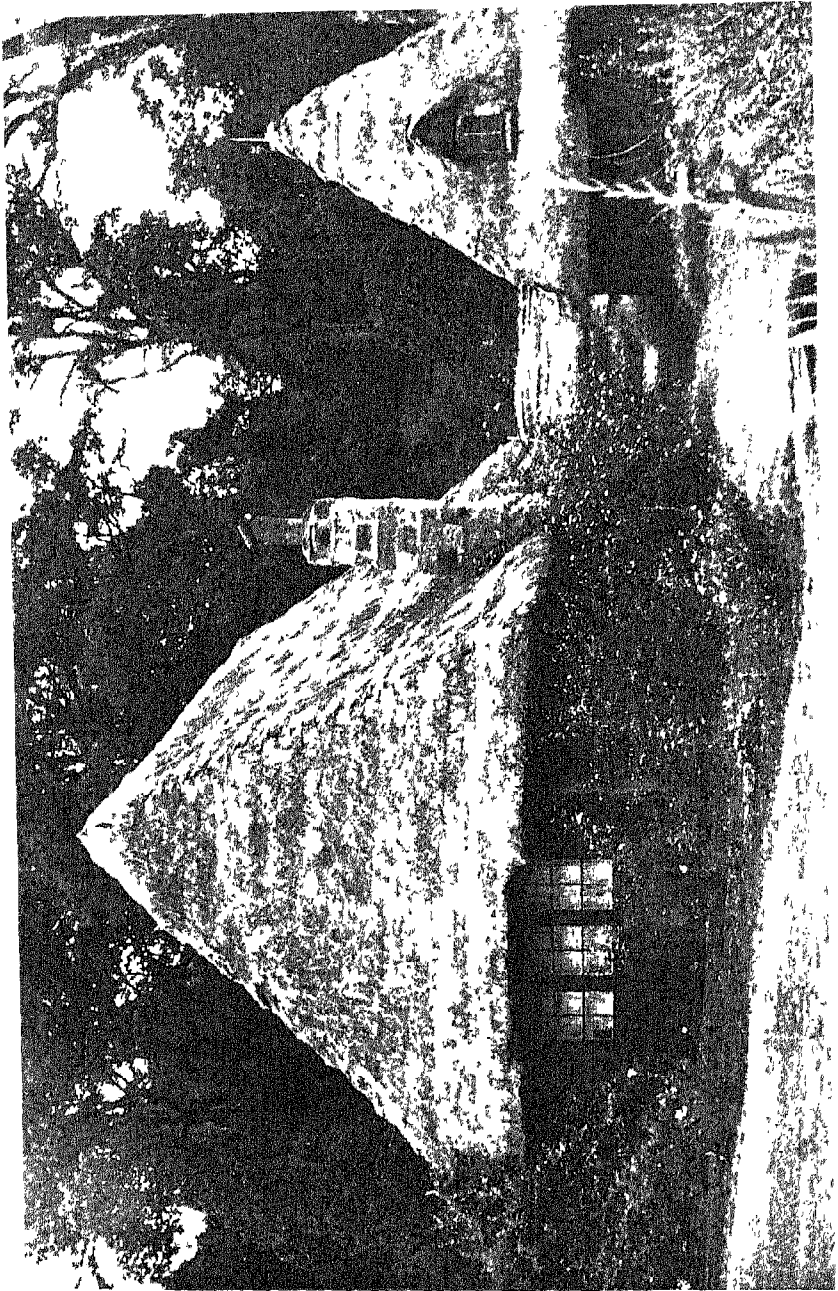
among the peasants will dispossess the less able from their holdings by direct purchase, and these dispossessed will drift to the towns and create a social problem of major proportions. I only give these details as a warning to the experts who have so consistently been wrong about Africa and its potential.

Our economy, I know, is criticised on the grounds of our paying such low wages that the development of the Land Units (native) is essential but our critics forget that we are in business and that we are not philanthropists, and that the African must look to his abilities if he wishes to progress. Add to this the futility of the new identity system whereby a man can wander at will, and whereby an army of itinerant idlers are allowed to go from one job to another until they are at last unemployable, and we have a 15 per cent. wastage who are unemployable simply because there is no discipline which will enforce a man to remain in his place of work for longer than he cares.

Africa has been described as "miles and miles of bloody Africa," and the emptiness of great tracts of land is oppressive. Great plains of scorched grass and thorn, a grey emptiness during the day, turning to a burnt sienna in the evening. The great hills and volcanoes lie athwart the plains like monsters in profound sleep, their flanks scarred by the erosion of countless centuries, and in contrast, the high forested hills have withstood the weathering but are now threatened by another enemy—the growing population who now survive famine, disease, and premature death as a result of modern medicine. It is a triumph of Western civilisation, but it will be the tragedy of Africa. The hypodermic syringe is man's worst enemy, more deadly than bombs, for a man can live without the former, but civilisations will pass by reason of famine. The African worships the "sindano," or needle, as more potent than any medicine or charms, and such is the power of mind over matter that an injection of distilled water is preferred to no injection, because the cure lies in the charm of the needle and not in the contents of the syringe.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

I started this story with the idea of recording a way of life which I believe will become rarer as the years pass. In view of the fact that the African is for the most part disinterested in working, I believe that the days of the independent farmer will by degrees give way to the age of big units which will be for the most part manned by workers from England and the continent of Europe. The process will be slow at first, but by the time world prices have returned to a lower level it will be found that the African is no longer an economic unit on a farm, and that he will have to be replaced by an efficient European who can handle and repair machinery, work milking machines, and do all the jobs, other than actual herding of stock, himself. Overseers of labour are no longer wanted, though they will remain until farming methods are revolutionised, and I can well see that my methods are doomed and that they could not long survive the scrutiny of time. As soon as the economics of farming reduce the gap between production expenses and profit margins I see in that future a nearer approach to the cautious efficiency of English farming.



OUR FOREST HOME



KIPSIGIS GIRL

II

"Paradise exists not merely in men's memories, dreams and creative imagination. It is promised in the beauty of nature, in the sunlight, the shining stars, the blue sky . . . the forests and the cornland . . . the flowers and the splendour of the animal world. My salvation is bound up with that."

BERDYAEV, in *The Destiny of Man*.

MY story nears an end, and as I look at all the problems which rack Kenya today I can see dark clouds in places and rays of sunshine piercing the gloom like rays of hope for the future. I suppose that there is a fundamental fear from which all communities suffer; a fear that one might dominate the other and deprive them of some privilege, or land, or power, which they desire for themselves. The pace of advancement in the political field has tried to keep level with the advance of science, and this has led to immaturity and muddled thinking. The African has ability, of that there is no doubt, but what he is unable to understand is the fact that there is a vast gulf between the man who drives an engine on the railway and the man who draws out the plans and builds that same engine.

This also applies to the machinery of state. We hear the vociferous demands of the African to be allowed to take responsibility; to be made the head of a department, but he cannot understand that he is not fitted for the post and considers that the issue is purely racial. Who is to be the arbiter of ability in another? "When he that is a fool passes by the way, he telleth everybody that he is a fool." But if you tell him so he will not believe it, and in the same way, if you tell an African that he has not the integrity to take on

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

a post, not knowing the meaning and the responsibilities of a post requiring integrity, he will assume he is being victimised. This lack of character, this inability to resist malpractices when in a position of authority, is generic, and it will take generations of training before an administrator of absolute integrity will evolve. Maybe there are a few already, and under supervision they are admirable, but the bribery and graft which has so besmirched the Emergency amongst the Africans, between adherents of Mau Mau and the forces of law and order, has only emphasised the distance that the African has yet to travel before he can be left to his own devices. Looking across to the West Coast of Africa it seems that the same difficulties have to be overcome.

The Report by the Town Clerk of Norwich on the workings of one of the West Coast governments left one in no doubt as to the state of affairs since the withdrawal of the British. In Kenya, of course, a great amount of soil must be carried down the rivers before self-government could happen, and it could never happen with the presence of Europeans and Asians, but the clamour will be for more and more representation, and I have yet to meet an African who can represent anything but himself. This is a harsh statement but it is depressingly true, for there is no greater oppressor of the African than another African.

I do not believe in appeasement in any form. Nobody would wish to hold the African back, and nobody can prevent him from achieving his legitimate aspirations, but until he has acquired more skill in the art of living he must confine his activities to the perfection of his local government in his own areas. Having reached a responsible position in this direction of his own affairs, he would be in a position to appoint his representative to some form of federal parliament, which I believe to be the only possible form of government for Kenya. I base my example on Switzerland, and I insist that for the next fifty years and more Europeans will dominate

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

the direction of affairs. No concessions can be countenanced in this matter, because any weakness on this one point must be the wedge which will dislodge Western domination in eastern Africa. It is useless to give a vote to a man and a woman with a hoe and half a dozen goats. This, I know, is not even suggested, but the method under consideration will lead to universal franchise through force of numbers, and this will lead to our liquidation. Why it is that we cringe away from this word domination, when in fact we must continue to dominate for the good both of the country and of its peoples, is beyond my wit. I can see nothing to quarrel with the word seeing that it is for the best, but in these days there is a bogey called "foreign opinion," and members of United Nations hailing from Venezuelos and other such curious parts of South America appear to influence world opinions and by their public utterances on how Tanganyika should be governed, they are on a par with members of comic opera.

Certainly, what is needed in Kenya is a better sense of proportion. There can be little doubt that the Emergency has raised tempers, and a weak Government has added to the babel of voices who would all produce an answer to our problems. Without restraint and cultural tolerance, Christian civilisation in Africa is an anachronism, and the future requires leadership such as is hard to find in this day. I remember many years ago travelling on a German ship to Kenya. On board there was an admiral of the German Navy of the 1914 War. One day he turned to me and said : " You British are a great nation, and you built up your Empire in the certain belief that ' might is right.' You still have the might but you think that it is wrong." That was at the time when Sir Winston Churchill was hammering at the British Government to stop disarming. Now, ten years after the Second World War, we are at it again ; we have not the will to rule and to stay.

The year of 1955 approaches its end and with the oncoming of the dry weather the pastures are turning brown. Frosts

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

have come to the open hills, but they melt to rime beside the forests whose long arms shelter the grassland, so that we, who live here, have grazing for our cows long after the rest of the country is parched. The pastures are brittle and we watch the sky for that cloud no bigger than a man's hand which at this season, and in all desiccated countries, suddenly swells to a great storm which engulfs the land and then sweeps away. At this season of drought the high gales roar incessantly, and in the forest, day and night, we hear the crash of trees, and throughout the day on the farm the mower can be heard cutting the hay. At this season the labour work overtime so as to get the harvest in before the rains break.

One of the blessings of middle age is that the days become more leisurely and the urgency of living seems to recede with the passing of the years. There is more time to contemplate the natural scene as it unfolds itself from month to month, and we have more time and a deeper appreciation for small happenings which we observe around us in the garden or on the farm. Modern science can seek a way to supplant the laws of Nature by using the machine ; it can replace natural foods by synthesis and interfere with the molecular balance of the universe, and where it has been successful in these things, it has nonetheless failed to tell me what gives life to the lilies of the field, or what gives them their beauty, nor can it prevent the wind blowing where it listeth.

To have travelled as far as I have, away from civilisation, is to realise that once and for all I have crossed the Styx and that I will remain in the Africa that I love for the rest of my life. For six years I saw all that war can offer in Europe, and I know that their ways are not mine, and I prefer to be left to listen to my birds and to watch the soaring of the eagle over my cows in the glades. There, by the river, with its shy duck, its otter, and its myriad butterflies, there lies my salvation and no longer do I expect any more of life.

As a child in Cornwall I would spend all my holidays

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

wandering over the hills and combes and in the deep coves, and now that my own children have grown up and left me I return to my old loves, and I have found like to be much as Hardy found it :

“ Well, world, you have kept faith with me,
Kept faith with me ;
Upon the whole you have proved to be
Much as you said you were.
Since a child I used to lie
Upon the leaze and watch the sky,
Never, I own, expected I
That life would all be fair.”

It is just eight years since I started this farm, and during that time we have had to deny ourselves many of the pleasures of life, and human companionship. It was my lot to have to work incessantly, but I must record that my wife also worked until she came to a standstill and could do no more. In Africa I believe that one has to work harder than in England, or so it appears to those who return. During the eight years we have each of us had two months holiday, and therefore we are feeling the strain and have had to reduce the work so that we can carry on until our son returns. I no longer stand through the milking, recording the cows, but I have trained an African to do it though he has now been called away for three months after only one month of work. I shall take life more easily and watch my Ayrshires grow into something of which to be proud, and which I can hand over when the time arrives. Having lost one's children I suppose that the only thing is to keep a keen interest in something and to learn to live gracefully. I am experimenting with broadcast talks on all manner of subjects, from tribal histories to politics and wild animals. On the farm I find myself watching events so closely in the political field that I am hesitant to sink much money until things are resolved as they must be with time.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Also, prices for wire and other necessities are still too high to be economical, and for this reason also I await a levelling off of prices. That there is a great future for Kenya is certain, and I say this because I have great confidence in the younger generation of men and women who were born in Kenya and look upon it as their home. It is to them that we must look for leadership because they know how to lead the African, and are now doing so with success. Our present political leaders can only hold the fort until these young men are ready, and when that time comes the country will be united.

Not only in Kenya, but in every part of the world, men and women are finding themselves at the crossroads wondering which way destiny will lead them. I sometimes envy the old Dorobo who knows none of these perplexities which trouble us for the future of our children in Kenya. My life counts for little now. I have helped to pioneer the land; I have cleared forests and have ploughed the land; I have built homes and I have bred cattle and sheep, and in doing these things I have enjoyed every moment of my life, and in my later years I hope I shall be enabled to help still more the good of our lovely land. The battleground of the future will be to endeavour to canalise the rising "nationalism" of the African, and on this one factor depends the whole of the future of civilisation in Africa. Should our leaders falter and show weakness where strength is needed, then the whole fabric will collapse, but so long as we have the will to lead and to remain, all will be well, but should we fail in our duty to the black peoples, then we can only expect the fate of Rome.

It is Christmas of 1955, and in the New Year our children will all be in the forces of law and order. We remain on the land waiting from month to month for their short visits from the ends of the colony. They have their tasks and they are enthusiastic in their work of trying to bring the country back to normal. One of the most interesting qualities in our children is their unfailing loyalty to Kenya. I believe that

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

most Kenya children are imbued with this loyalty and it is heartening indeed to hear them talk of the future of their land. They wish to see England and to stay there a while, but they insist that they will return, as all their friends have returned, and for myself I have faith in them and in their ability to steer the country through all its present troubles.

My wife and I stand on the threshold of a new life. A life without the cares of a family. Possibly there will be a void which will have to be filled, and as I sit writing these last words the day is Christmas Eve of the birth of Christ, and this evening when I was up at the milking the cows were full and peacefully lying down, chewing the cud. I remembered that we used to tell the children the legend of how at midnight on this eve the kine would kneel in the mangers and in the fields in adoration, and of how the children of Dorsetshire would steal up to the byres at night to witness this act. They saw it with their own eyes, since a cow always falls on its knees when it is about to lie down, and our own children would stand open-eyed at the kneeling of the cows.

After the milking I returned to the house and to the comfort of the fireside, and I listened to the voices of a children's choir singing carols. Later in the evening there came a symphony, and in the stillness of the night the orchestra rose and fell as if seeking through harmony to some depth of human feeling. The wind instruments took up the motif, writhing to be freed from their melancholy, and then the strings broke through with joyful freedom and melted into the roll of drums.

There was a deep silence, and from the trees outside came the croaking wail of a hyrax. I kicked the embers to the back of the fire and I went to bed, knowing that I should waken in the morning remembering the past, happy children's voices, now no longer with us, and I would give thanks for the blessings which have come to this home.

APPENDIX I

THE DOROBO

THERE are said to be twelve groups of the Dorobo or, the Ogiek as they call themselves, scattered throughout Kenya and Tanganyika. They are forest dwellers and hunters and up to 1925 they seldom emerged from the forest areas, which have been their homes since time immemorial. In that year the Government began to impose restrictions on their hunting activities, and since that date these people have had to abandon to a great degree their old mode of life and in its place they have had to move away from the forests and endeavour, without success, to identify themselves with adjoining tribes.

The Dorobo are not a tribe, but a number of clan groups, subdivided into families who have lived in the high forested mountains in different parts of East Africa, isolated from the tribes who bound on their forests, and only in contact with them for the purpose of bartering their meat, skins, honey, bark and medicinal plants for maize and other simple needs. Of recent years, as a result of being chivvied by the administration, forest and game departments, they have been forced either to sign on as forest squatters and turn into cultivators and stockmen on the fringes of the forest, to move into recognised reserves (which is anathema to them), or lastly, to reside on farms wherever they can get work. Many have settled thus, and it is noticeable that they still cling to their old customs and social habits, and it seems that latterly there has been a revival of their clan life with the opening both of the Tinet and the Olenguerone areas of the Mau Forest.

The Dorobo have no known history, and they can give no clue as to their ancestry. All that may be deduced from their social structure is that, though they borrow much from the tribe with whom they are affiliated geographically, they have little in common with these in their internal clan organisation. For instance, though

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

they will employ the same names and words for their age-groups and for their relationship names, their social structure is unique to their family and clan system. Their close contact with forest and trees has had a distinct influence on these people and it shows itself so distinctly as to make them stand out from the Nilotic and Hamitic tribes with whom they have contact, and by whom they are regarded with some awe both for their elusiveness and for their unique forest lore. They are reserved and retiring, with a lack of interest for the happenings of the world which lies beyond their forests, a wide understanding of natural phenomenon and a sense of honesty quite foreign to the average African, a sense possibly born of the need for mutual respect and integrity in the matter of hunting and beekeeping rights of the various family and clan rights. The forest areas throughout their country and within the now settled areas are split up into territories, demarcated and held from father to son. Families belonging to certain clans operate in their own districts, and within these districts there can be, or used to be, no poaching by outsiders. Since the scattering of these people many of the families have become disunited, but it is significant that since the Emergency, with the Government's attention directed elsewhere, they have been able to regroup themselves, at least in the Mau, into their erstwhile "koret" or districts, and so well have they entrenched themselves as to have forced the administration to leave them alone. I have watched with interest and relief the final release of forest areas in the Mau with a dividing strip of one mile between their settlements and the farming area. Already I see their clearings, or "imbaret" as they call these community maize fields, and I am told that their elders have so established their authority that outsiders have been ousted, family relationships enforced, and kinship of clans revived with a strict return to exogamy.

Each clan has an animal totem, or "tiondo," and the names of these are the Crested Crane, the Duiker, the Hyæna, the Baboon, the Bush-pig, and Rain. A man refers to his animal as "oret." Marriage is allowed between, but not within, these animal groups, whilst pre-marital intercourse is tolerated between the clans but not within the clan. The Dorobo are not prolific breeders owing to their sparse rations and so women are scarce and cared for. Hence it will be noticed that their women are very seldom allowed to work

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

as casual labourers, although they do all the manual work at home. Only by being fluent in their language can one get to know all their vast store of folklore. There is probably only one living Englishman with this knowledge,¹ and even with my limited understanding I can see a fascinating field of research which, if not carried out soon, will be lost for ever. There is the curious legend of the creation of Woman (Eve) from the shinbone of a Dorobo, there are the many stories of the cunning of the hare, probably if not certainly, the original tales of the "Brer Rabbit" stories of the American slaves, there are birds of good and bad omens, legendary animals such as the "Chemosiit" which corresponds with the tales of Red Ridinghood. They know the cossypha, the finest songster in Africa, as the bird which calms their cattle with its whistling notes, and thus it is that whatever the tale they tell, it has always something of the magic of the forests and glades in which they live and die. With the march of civilisation there is much that is being overlaid and forgotten. Much of their bee-lore is no longer practised, with the result that honey is not so easily come by today. With the restriction of hunting the youth of the clans are not being trained so carefully, and the old custom of passing on the tales and mythology to the young men when out on their hunting trips has fallen into disuse, and with this goes much that must be the very bedrock of human folklore.

Little, if anything, is known of the history of the Dorobo. Ptolemy in 200 B.C. and Pliny in A.D. 100 are almost the only writers who mention tribes of the interior of Africa. They mostly wrote of the Eastern seaboard of Africa—the Aromatophora—or the spice countries, now the Somalilands, from whence came the elephants and the hoopoes, the spices and the acacia-wood and many other goods including ivory, and only one tribe of hunters are mentioned, the Watta, who have been identified as the Uauat of the Inscription of Una, a traveller who journeyed up to the sud country of the Nile, and states that he traded with these peoples, probably of the Abyssinian highlands where acacia grows.

Whilst on the subject of these ancient writers it is interesting to follow the researches of G. W. B. Huntingford, who points out the

¹ G. W. B. Huntingford, *Azania and Social Organisation of the Dorobo*.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Mountain of the Moon is certainly Kilimanjaro, and not the Ruwenzori. Besides the fact that its snows resemble a new moon, Ptolemy tells of a trader called Diogenes who, in A.D. 100, on returning from a trading expedition to India landed at Rhapta, now Pangani, and travelled inland twenty-five days' march till he reached "the snow-clad mountains whose snows descend to the lakes of the Nile." These were called "the Mountains of the Moon," and the lakes may have been a very enlarged Amboselli or even Lakes Natron and Magadi. In the thirteenth century there is also a vague reference to a Jebel el Kamr, or "mountain of the moon," by an Arab, Ibn Said, who placed them between Mombasa and Sofala.

Judging by Egyptian friezes, these Dorobo may well have been the hunters to the Ptolemys in the densely forested mountains of Abyssinia (now, alas, most of it gone) from whence they made their way south, driven before the axe which has shorn the mountains of the north. There is very little to base any theory upon in the matter of African history. Pliny, writing of the interior of Kenya, states :

"It is said that in parts of the interior from the east coast there are people whose whole face is flat, without a nose ; and that some have no upper lip, others no tongue. We hear also of people who have no nostril nor any opening in the face beyond a single hole through which they breathe, and through which they drink by means of an oaten straw, the grain of which, growing wild, they eat. Some tribes use nods and gestures instead of speech, and before the time of Ptolemy were ignorant of the use of fire."

East Africa, in fact, has no records beyond the coastal belt, and even there, has only imposed civilisations. Peoples like the Dorobo just float into our ken and will soon be absorbed by the needs of progress. They can never be of any use to a modern State, and so they should be left entirely alone, and if they are to survive, then the forests, outside of which they cannot live, must be preserved. Should the Mau Forest be exploited as a paper concession, then these peoples will fade out like the game they hunt, and Africa will be the poorer for a great forest and its inhabitants.

Recently, in the forest near my home, we have found an elephant tusk and bones, and these are witness to the prowess of these hunters. I hear that they have started hunting big game once more

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

since the forces of law and order have been busy elsewhere. Good hunting to them, for with their bows and arrows and pits and spears they hardly upset the balance of Nature, whereas a tourist, and a foreigner, with a high velocity rifle, is permitted to kill in a month enough meat to feed a Dorobo family for two years. No wonder the hunter in his forests hates the white man for imposing his laws on the black hunter and allowing the white man to break them.

There is always some mystery about people who live in the forest. They appear and disappear, always silently, and seem to know the very moment when an intruder enters their domain. From my own experience I know that whenever I have gone down into the Mau Forest I have been seen and watched, largely out of curiosity, as to the purpose of my visit, but nonetheless all my movements have been noted and spread around. Other tribes hold these Dorobo in awe, ascribing to them powers of uncanny movement and observation. Their knowledge of tracking has been invaluable during the Emergency, and it is a chastening experience for a white man to watch them at work. We who consider ourselves so superior to the black man should take a lesson in humility from these trackers. Before now I have lost a favourite dog in a snare, and have been led for a mile and a half through thick bush and forest, purely by tracking, to my snared pet.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new," and thus I see the older generation of hunters passing on one by one. Only last month I went down into the forest to see a sick Dorobo. I found the old man sitting naked in front of a fire waiting for death. He had stayed out night and day, as he said that the forest, with its animals whom he had hunted all his life, was his home and that, if he was to be collected to his forefathers, then he must die under the trees. I gave him three shots of penicillin and he is still alive. I saw him last with the ligament of a bush-pig which he had killed, making a bowstring.

I have put in a plea to the Government that the Dorobo may be left alone. Last year, 1955, the Ogiek Kapchepkendi of the Tinderet Forest, which bounds on the Nandi country, were moved one hundred miles to their new home at Olenguerone in the Mau, and not far from my farm. I pointed out to the authorities that these men will very certainly return during the years, each dry weather,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

in order to extract the honey from their hives and probably to do some light trapping. I trust that they will be left in peace because otherwise the whole fabric of their lives will crumble, and Africa will lose what is probably the last of the real hunting peoples other than the Bushmen and Pigmies.

Gregory in his *The Great Rift Valley*, written in 1893, met with the Dorodo on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro river, and he reports on them as being a cross between a Bushman of South Africa and a Pigmy of the Congo. Sir Harry Johnston, in his great work, *The Uganda Protectorate*, gives a photograph of a typical Dorobo of that time, and in contrast with the photograph I have given in the text of this book there has taken place a greater mixing with Hamitic and Nilotic since that day. The type portrayed by Johnston is still to be met with in the Mau, though the Dorobo of the Nandi area have become more negroid, and my illustration shows a Pigmy-Prognathous type which is becoming very rare among the Dorobo but of course quite common in the Bantu groups.

Recently I have received a letter from a game warden in the Handeni area of Tanganyika, and he has described the Dorobo of that area. The words in current use which he sent me are almost identical with those of the Mau and the only great difference is to be found in the words of greeting which are wholly Bantu. This must be the most southerly extent of the Dorobo. In the Handeni area they have left their mountain and forest homes and entered the thorn country of low altitude. They are solely hunters and are not molested by the Tanganyika Government, as they do probably less harm in one year than would a tourist from Europe in one week with his high velocity rifles. *The African feels bitterly* the game laws which allow strangers to massacre game but penalise him for setting a game-trap. This matter of game extermination will soon take on a real importance as, at the present rate of slaughter, there will soon be little game left in Africa, and the lion will become as legendary as the Nandi bear, which once roamed the forest where I now live at Dimbilil, and was exterminated by the first wave of Hamites, the Masai, when they penetrated from the north. The "Keriit," or Nandi bear as it is now called by Europeans, was a great killer of cattle, and the precursors of the Masai, the Sirikwa, whom I have mentioned, built their cattle "bomas" below ground

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

in order to avoid losses from the Keriit. This is purely legendary and is handed down by the Dorobo, who were, of course, in these hills long before the first wave of Hamites.

During the Mau Mau rebellion the country has been scoured for Dorobo as trackers. These men have proved invaluable to the forces of law and order, and it can be said that the Dorobo's skill at his craft has been one of the main causes for the success of tracker parties leading the military and the police to the forest hide-outs of the rebels.

After the Kikuyu tenants of Olenguerone had refused to keep to their tenancy agreements, and after their expulsion, it was decided to create a home for the Dorobo in this area, and now at last, after thirty years of being pushed around, the Government has realised that these forest peoples, by their loyalty and service in the Emergency, have earned some recognition, and I trust that the great Trans-Mara bamboo country will slowly be added to their Reserve, and that they will be able to preserve their traditional way of life.

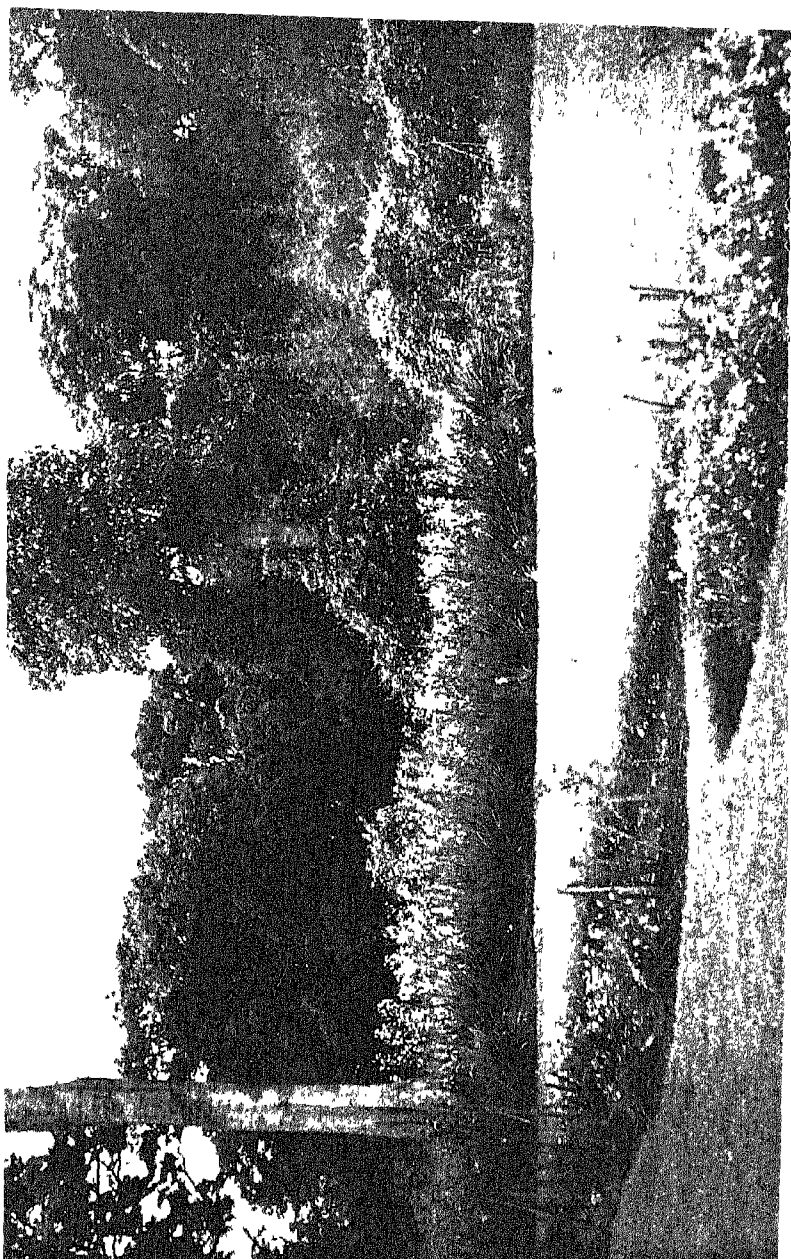
APPENDIX II

SOME REACTIONS TO THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SIR HUGH DOW

(Published in June 1955)

IT is not before time that someone as authoritative as Sir Hugh Dow and his team should state that the main problem before Kenya is economic and not political. In recent times we have had a plethora of political controversies and theories and now at last we have a Report before us, albeit contentious, which I believe sincerely aims at showing the way to economic prosperity. Whether theory can be translated into practice ; whether there is finance for such policies as are advocated, is not within my ken, but I suspect that the immense cost of the Emergency will cancel out the whole Report for as many years as it takes the colony to recover from the setback caused by the Mau Mau rebellion, or until such a time as loans are made available, whichever comes the sooner.

I must, in this short survey, pass over the many matters which concern recommendations other than those which immediately affect the land. Many of those, such as the need for better and long-overdue communications, are admirable ; especially where it is emphasised that road and rail expansion have been sacrificed to the apparent need for social advancement and welfare. This Government gambit, in which the pawns in the form of money-earning services have been sacrificed for social services, has long been a source of contention between our rulers and the many informed European settlers whose knowledge of the African mind and its reaction to our modern concepts and standards of living has been deeper than that of many of the administrators whose extreme of idealism and emotion has led to the negation of Mau Mau. Only recently the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned his congregations against idealism and emotion at either extreme because they have



A CORNER OF THE GARDEN



ELEPHANT TUSK

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

no reality in the day-to-day dealings between races of different intellectual and social levels. Any extreme must be detrimental, but that must not preclude any community from the right to stand firm in face of a policy which threatens their very survival.

Time and again the Report makes reference to the fact that much land in the highlands is either unoccupied, not utilised, or improperly farmed. This, they claim, is the reason for the African feeling a sense of injustice at being denied these "broad acres" which the European has not developed. Much mischief has been caused by misinformed agitators, and surely the Commission must have consulted such bodies as the European Settlement Board before agreeing that the African has cause for feeling this injustice. I ask the question, "Where are the broad acres?" Is it not true that the Settlement Board have searched every corner of the settled area for land suitable for further white settlement, and that they have been driven to subdividing farms and buying from the owners? There is, of course, marginal land; there are waterless tracts of country running into thousands of acres and there are the forests which we know for fact that the Kikuyu tribe wish to exploit, but these forests are reserved as catchment areas for the conservation of cover and water and they but cover $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the colony, which is far below the reckoned safety margin in any other country whose forests are controlled. The African is ruthless with trees and has no understanding of its water conserving potential nor of its influence on climate. Even the clearing of indigenous forest by the Forest Department, and the planting of exotic trees, is going to have a profound effect on water resources and farming in Kenya, for, mountains once clothed in natural forest where springs abounded and where rivers were permanent, are now, under cypress, becoming drier, with a falling water-table, and impermanent rivers.

Linked to this accusation of unused land, elsewhere, the Report admits that there is a grave lack of capital for development, so that its censures on the European can hardly be held as valid since it would be useless to put Africans on to those same "broad acres" without the capital to develop them. These empty lands need boreholes and dams, afforestation and irrigation, and Europeans would very certainly do all the developing if the facilities for making a living were present, but as it is the Commission would appear to

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

favour the settlement of Africans who could only survive by subsistence-farming and thereby add nothing to the national production. The Commission are obviously not *au fait* with the problems of land utilisation in Africa, and of course this very same lack of knowledge cost the British public 35 million pounds in Tanganyika only a few years ago. It is one of the blind spots in British colonial rule that the man on the spot is seldom consulted.

The African is as yet not ready for our complicated system of land tenure. By this I mean that it would be considered a "bad risk" to loan him money against a piece of land on mortgage or on fixed assets. The Commission states that there are such men, but I defy them to find more than can be counted on the fingers of both hands. To the ordinary man, his wife and his hoe and piece of Africa, there is but a slender thread between his crib of maize and starvation, and that has been so since time immemorial and the process of change from this economy to one of plenty is slow, and to the African, painful, as it entails hard work, which is a habit foreign to his way of life.

It will be noted that the Commission insists on the leasing of land in the White Highlands to Africans and makes a point of treading warily where private interests are concerned. This is wise, but I fancy that no private owner is going to saddle himself with so unreliable a liability as an African tenant farmer. That is no injustice to the African for he is generically incapable of such trust, and I say that after thirty years of living with and working with the African, and I would not be still here if I thought I was saying something ill of him in making that statement. The Government, under pressure, will be forced to buy the land and be the landlord, for the farmer whose land is coveted will sell out if the law forces the issue. After all, the Government already owns 400,000 acres in the settled area and there has been a feeling for some time now that only lack of funds is preventing them from taking up more.

In the course of time we shall find fewer private owners and more tenant farmers of whatever race, and much of the land will have to be taken over by the amalgamation of farms into big concerns whose capital can develop those areas unsuitable to smallholders. It is proposed to impose stringent control on the transfer of land between races until confidence is restored. Who is going to create

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

that confidence ? How could such confidence be created ? There will never be anything but bitter opposition, but that will not be my battle, for it will not come in my day. There may be acquiescence under pressure of the law, but I could never agree (and I believe I speak for the majority of farmers) to the opening of the whole of the Highlands to African tenants, though I do agree, and I have stated it in the course of my book, that there are areas, and I could state which they are, which we should voluntarily hand back to the African, and I believe that such a gesture is very necessary and would do more to bring confidence into our dealings with the Africans than anything else. Why did the Commission fail to recommend this course ? We could not agree to an indiscriminate and widespread leasing of land because the African cannot be prevented from the illegal trafficking in cattle from area to area, with the resultant spreading of such diseases as foot-and-mouth, which has so recently caused very heavy losses to the stock industry, and especially to the farmers of the Uasin Gishu. The bride price enters into this need for stock movement, as also, in the Nandi area, does the Nandi system of cattle ownership, known as the "Kaptich." I am prepared to challenge the Commission that they have never heard of this system which affects every Nandi squatter and also some hundred thousand head of cattle.

I would, too, ask the Commission another question. Did they ever hear of the appalling sequel to the leasing of land to the Kikuyu at Olenguerone in the Mau, and not far from my farm ? The details of mass evictions at the point of a gun were hushed up and never reached the Press, as Olenguerone was at that time a day's march from civilisation. The eviction took the form of a scorched earth policy and men and women were hunted by police, their crops were cut down and their huts were burnt. I am not suggesting that the administration were wrong in the action they were forced to take, on the contrary, it was the only possible course, but with the implementation of tenancy agreements within the White farming areas we shall witness such scenes once again. No settler will agree to such a treacherous means of ending European settlement and farming in Kenya, and this issue alone will pre-judge the whole Report on land utilisation because it is virtually recommending what was known, before the Emergency, as "Squatter farming"

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

and the Report specifically states that the old system of squatter contracts should in future be tenancy contracts. Had they known anything of the above matters they would not have recommended a tenancy contract. Further to this, it would appear that the Government will acquire the powers compulsorily to purchase land, and from this we can but assume that it will also have powers to impose tenancies as and where it sees fit. This piecemeal allocation of tenancy rights will spell the decline of European farming, and the only honourable way to respect titles and private interests is to carve out areas adjacent to African Land Units, dispossess their European owners by outright purchase and settle Africans on the vacant land, and the dispossessed Europeans can then be accommodated within the White Reserve. Anything other than this will be resisted by every farmer in the land.

I turn to another veiled threat to our continued existence. The Report refers to privileges to which the Europeans feel themselves entitled both by virtue of civilisation and race. It says: "East Africa cannot afford to permit that customs or vested interests of the past should continue to lead to the waste of resources through ill-used land or useless cattle, through consumption based on privilege or status, through ill-trained labour, through restrictions on employment on members of particular races, through agricultural production protected by anti-social devices . . . no immigrant should be led to expect or to be given privileges on the ground of his race or origin which conflicts with the harmonious social and economic development of the country. . . ." I am quite unaware of any of these malpractices and I recommend that the Commission elucidate this mischievous passage, because, as it stands, it can only exacerbate racial feeling and tension. Was that its purpose? If we enjoy any privileges they are merely those of our superior civilisation, and if we have to throw everything we have achieved overboard in order to appease the primitive society which surrounds us, then it would be as well to halt any further immigration. Who was it, after all, who induced Englishmen to settle here at the turn of the century, and who brought prosperity? Consider Kenya's history since 1910 when production began. From 1914 to 1918 the settlers who were not fighting were under an obligation to feed the armies in the field, then there was a period of closer

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

settlement and of expansion until 1929, followed by the depression which rendered the farmers in worse plight, relatively, than their employees. Once again the call came to those on the land, many of them lonely women who struggled to do their bit as their war effort whilst their men drove the Italians out of Africa. From 1946 there followed a period of recovery, and then directly by reason of misgovernment, and just when some measure of prosperity was in sight, the Mau Mau rebellion with all its horror and its astronomical expense came to ruin the land. Is this what Sir Hugh Dow calls a story of privilege ? But let it pass ; I am not intent upon abusing this Report because it is, in spite of some yellow streaks, something to chew upon during the next fifty years.

Finally, let me deflate another suggestion which is based on understandable ignorance. There is a reference to "watertight and exclusive tribal reservations," and the intent is that all tribal boundaries be thrown open to all and that a system of individual titles to land be instituted. The black peoples of Kenya are not just Africans, a homogeneous collection of tribes. The Hamites and the Bantu, to mention only two branches of the human race, are as apart as the Englishman and the Slav, and therefore this idea of lifting boundaries could first be recommended in Europe before being enforced in Africa. In fact it just will not work, or if the Commission think it will, let them plant a few Jaluo in the Masailand and watch the result.

So I turn to *The Times* of 31st May 1955, entitled "The Fight for Africa," and dealing with the Report :

"Africa must of course evolve something distinctive for itself. The idea that this will be based on Western Christian civilisation, as is the policy of the political leaders in Kenya, seems . . . illusory. The need is for synthesis . . . but it can only be successful provided racial stresses are kept at low pressure, and the natural evolutionary processes are allowed to do their work without artificial political interruptions.

"This only means one thing and that is a multi-racial society, and the end to British settlement in Kenya, for if this is the future, we have been betrayed by our own countrymen. Sic transit gloria . . .

"ERROL WHITTALL."

NOTE.—This appendix was written on 22nd June 1955.

APPENDIX III

NOTES ON FARMING IN KENYA

FOR English farmers who are contemplating settling in Kenya, it may be of interest to have some approximate figures of the cost of starting a farm. Both the European Settlement Board and private persons are buying and selling subdivisions of farms and these are being offered at prices varying from £6 per acre for undeveloped wheatlands, and in the region of £10 per acre for partially developed farms or forest land which have been cleared and paddocked. By "developed," I mean a farm with a wooden house and a few farm buildings, and with a few ten-acre paddocks and perhaps a small area under the plough. Undeveloped wheatlands are almost entirely without improvements.

Newly broken wheatland with the aid of superphosphates and seeding at 100:100 should produce an average of 8 bags to the acre and the costs are about four of those bags. The price of wheat is Shs. 50 per bag of 200 lbs. Fencing these lands costs about £100 per mile, a wheat store can be built to hold 3000 bags for £200, and a temporary house quite adequate to make a home for a family and built from farm material can be erected for the same figure provided the walls are mud and wattle, the floor tongue and grooved cedar, and the roof thatched. Cows of medium-to-good quality cost £30 to £40 each, and a high-class pedigree bull of imported parentage can be bought for £175.

Ewes, either Romney Marsh or Corriedale, an Australian breed, can be bought for Shs. 80 and pedigree flock rams for £30. Wool is sold on the London market, and there is the Kenya Meat Commission which will take all fat wethers or lambs. These fetch Shs. 1 per lb. and Shs. 1/50 per lb. dressed weight. There are ranching areas suitable for the raising of beef, and the land in these areas is considerably cheaper than the above figures as the carrying capacity is low and water scarce. Average grazing land carries one

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

beast to three acres, up to one per acre and down to ten acres per beast. Steers can fetch up to £40 with a carcass of 800 lbs. In examining a farm or its subdivisions, one of the most important matters to investigate is the easy availability of water both for home and stock. Bore-holes are satisfactory in some areas but a source of disappointment in others, so that surface water is a great asset. The price of land is governed by distance from station, state of roads, availability of water, percentage of land which can be cropped, altitude, and therefore the type of produce marketed, and the rainfall. Cattle do best above 6500 ft., and sheep will not thrive below 7500 ft. Pigs fatten at any altitude and poultry do best between 6000 ft. and 7500 ft. Pyrethrum will not grow below 7000 ft., and this is about the limit for wheat, oats and barley. Deciduous fruit grow above 8000 ft. and citrus below 6000 ft. I make no mention of tea and coffee as these plantation crops do not concern the mixed farmer. Nearly all cultivation is mechanical in these days, though the ox is still used and is far cheaper, if slower.

Marketing organisations are efficient. The Kenya Co-op. Creamery takes all cream and whole milk, the Meat Commission take fatstock ; horticulture, poultry, pigs and pyrethrum all have their organisations, and the Kenya Farmers' Association is the main trading Co-op. in the country.

With a capital of £5000 and help from the Settlement Board as a tenant, or with £10,000, a man should be able to pull through so long as he has not heavy family commitments. Labour is often indifferent at first until the sheep have been sorted from the goats, but so long as a man is prepared to do all the jobs himself, aided by an African, he will find some capable individuals, especially on the mechanical side, thus leaving the farmer free to attend to work. The African, however, is unreliable.

Tractors cost about £600 to £800, paraffin or Diesel, and heavy ploughs, disc harrows, drills, in the region of £120. Commercial trucks can be bought for £800, piping, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, varies round 80 cents per foot, 4-h.p. engines at £70, water pumps at £60, and stone or brick storage tanks can be built for £10 per 1000 gallons capacity. This list is very incomplete, but it will give a farmer something with which to compare, and he will have to assess the running capital required to work a farm at £5 per acre per year.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

To cover costs, at least 40 milking cows are required and it is not economical to run less than 100 ewes with their followers. Pigs fetch as baconers, £10 each, thus a minimum monthly turnover of five baconers is profitable. Given labour for picking and a mechanical weeder, 10 acres of pyrethrum will give a net profit of £300 a year. Both fruit and vegetable growing can be profitable near a railway, given water for dry-weather production, and for residential retired persons, flower-growing brings an income.

East Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London, W.C.2, can supply all other details.

POSTSCRIPT

SOME say that the good days of Kenya are passed. If this is so, and I believe that it is true, then I am thankful that I knew those good days when the country was more inaccessible and the Africans were smiling and happy with their lot. This was of course before the days of the agitator, and especially before the day of the era of political cranks whose one objective has been, in recent years, to stir up trouble by the simple means of putting incongruous ideas into simple heads.

Progress, as conceived by Western minds, is fast changing the land, and though I do not condemn the inevitable I do question the speed at which the reformers would impose their social changes. Science has gone so far now that the whole future of Africa is dependent upon further application of control in the fields of pests such as the tsetse, so that new lands can be thrown open to human habitation ; in public works in the form of irrigation and dams for drought areas, and in conservation of forests and grasslands, and tillage, so that the populations may be able to grow sufficient food that they might maintain and even raise their present standards.

Having myself witnessed the days before the piston engine invaded every corner of Africa, and especially of Kenya, and having seen the results of this impact of Western infiltration, I am convinced that the African, with deeper understanding than we would credit him, has realised that this exploitation has been largely, if not wholly, for the benefit of the European, and that he has merely played the part of the hewer of wood and the drawer of water. How else could he interpret it when he sees prosperity in which he cannot share ? That he is inherently incapable of sharing in this scramble only serves to convince him that his frustration is a very real grievance and that only by removing the cause can he return to a normal way of living.

My son is a district officer in charge of a fort which is situated on the forest boundary of the Kikuyu Reserve. He has seventy tribal police in his charge and he earns, at the age of nineteen years,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

a salary of £600. My herdsman here on the farm also has a son who is a corporal in the King's African Rifles and is also serving in Fort Hall in the Kikuyu Reserve. He earns three shillings and ninepence a day, and has a wife and family who reside on this farm. Nothing will persuade my old herdsman that the comparison of our two sons' positions in the forces is not grossly unfair, and no argument will have any effect upon his convictions. They are totally unwarranted conclusions, but the African is quite unable to understand that the abilities and the integrity, and such qualities as character and leadership, of the white man are an essential part of administrative posts. How can such things be explained to a man whose only occupation for fifty years has been the herding of cows? This very same mental vacuum occurs further up the scale when a secretary claims that he can fill an executive post in charge of a department. When he is told that he has not the ability he immediately concludes that racial discrimination enters into the matter. "When he that is a fool passeth by the way, he telleth everybody that he is a fool . . ." and the proverb fails to conclude that this same fool is unconscious of the fact.

To return to my old cowherd. Every now and then I call in our local vet. to deal with some trouble, such as a retained afterbirth in a cow. The old man walks away in disgust, telling me in his own language that I am wasting my money by paying a charlatan to do a job which both he and I could do with a cleft stick and some patience. He, of course, knows nothing of such diseases as Metritis and its concomitant evils, and he turns to me and says that had I paid him one-half of what the "Muganga," or doctor, charges, he would have done the job just as well. I am, in fact, an incomprehensible fool, and if you extenuate this idea you will have the African's belief that he would be better to return to the atavism of his forebears.

I can see this reversion taking place in the course of time, and I have warned my children and made provision for such. Multi-racial experiments, whether of government or of society, are playing straight into the hands of the black tide of "nationalism," and the only hope for Europeans is to federate and to move along parallel lines of advance which assures us of complete autonomy. Anything else is suicide.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

In the meantime I turn my face towards the great forest with its deep, winding river, and to my green glades where the cattle graze through the long days of sunshine. Beyond these I care for little, and I only pray that we have the vision to leave the trees of our forests, that we allow the great herds of game to wander at will over the great plains and hills of this beautiful land of ours, and I ask for these things so that our sons and daughters, to whom there is no other home but this, might feel, wherever they travel, a nostalgia for the bushveld and the cedar forests where life began for them. If this be their experience when in other lands, then we of the older generation who came here with faith in the future will know that we have founded a dominion of English stock which will remain to build a new nation in the heart of black Africa.

GLOSSARY

BIRDS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

- Buzzard, Augur. *Pterolestes augur*.
Chiff-chaff. *Phylloscopus collybita*.
Duck, African Black. *Anas Sparsa sparsa*.
Eagle, Crowned. *Stephanoaetus coronatus*.
Egret, Cattle. *Bubulcus ibis*.
Falcon, Peregrine. *Rhynchodon peregrinus calidus*.
Lanner. *Hierofalco biarmicus biarmicus*.
Flycatcher, Dusky. *Alseonax adustus adustus*.
Harrier, Montagu's. *Pygargus pygargus*.
Pallid. *Pseudocircus macrourus*.
Honey-Guide, Greater. *Indicator indicator*.
Kingfisher, Giant. *Megaceryle Maxima maxima*.
Kite, Yellow-billed. *Milvus aegyptus parasitus*.
Plover, Black-winged. *Titihoia melanoptera minor*.
Robin, Cape. *Caffrorhis caffra caffra* (*Cossypha*).
Shrike. Unrecorded but similar to Ruddy Bush Shrike with grey head and shoulders.
Stork, White. *Ciconia*, etc.
Sun-bird, Lesser double-collared. *Notiocinnyris chalybeus chalybeus*.
Thrush, Cape. *Afrochla olivacea olivacea*.
Tinker Barbet, Red-fronted. *Pogoniulus pusillus pusillus*.
Wagtail, Grey-headed Yellow. *Budytes feldegg*.
Warbler, Garden. *Elipais borin*.
Whitethroat. *Sylva communis communis*.
Woodpecker, Little Spotted. *Campethera cailliantii fulleborni*.

OTHER BIRDS SEEN ON THE FARM

- Grey Heron, Hammerhead, Glossy Ibis, Flamingo, Egyptian Goose, Vultures, Secretary Bird, Hobby Falcon, Red-footed Kestrel, Kestrel, Pigmy Falcon, Tawny Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Blue Nile Chanting Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard, Goshawks, Marsh Owl,

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

Eagle Owl, Francolin, African Quail, Button Quail, Snipe, Corncrake, Kavirondo Crane, Bustard, Green and Forest Pigeon, Doves, Parrot, Lourie, Red-billed Hoopoe, African Hoopoe, Red-chested Cuckoo, Nightjar, Swift, Bee-eater, Roller, Larks, Pippits, Swallows, Grey Cuckoo Shrike, Drongo, Golden Oriole, Bulbul, Stone-Chat, Warblers (many types), Whiteye, Wag-tails (white, grey, yellow, Angola), Bushshrike, Bou-bou Shrike, Fiscal Shrike, Glossy Starling, Sun-birds (many types), Weavers, Widow-bird, Sweet Waxbills, Seed-eaters, Canary, Green White-eye, and Martins.

TREES MENTIONED IN TEXT

Musharagi. *Olea Hochstetteri*.

Podo. *Podocarpus melaleucos*.

Cedar. *Juniperus procera*.

Mueri. *Pygeum Africanus*.

Makeo. *Dombeya Goetzenii*.

GAME AND OTHER ANIMALS ON OR NEAR
DIMBILIL FARM

Bongo. *Boocercus euryceros* Ogilby.

Buffalo.

Bushbuck. *Tragelaphus scriptus*.

Bushpig. *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*.

Duiker, Blue. *Philantomba caerulea*.

Common. *Sylvicapra grimmia*.

Red. *Cephalophus natalensis*.

Yellow-backed. *Cephalophus sylvicultrix*.

Elephant.

Forest Hog, Giant. *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*.

Hyrax, Tree. *Dendrohyrax*.

Leopard.

Lion.

Monkey, Colobus. *Colobus Occidentalis*.

White-nosed. *Cercopithecus rufocinctus centralis*.

Serval Cat. *Leptailurus serval*.

Steinbuck. *Raphicerus campestris*.

Reedbuck. *Redunca arundinum*.

Dimbilil : The Story of a Kenya Farm

ALSO TO BE FOUND

Antbear.	Hunting Dogs.
Civet.	Jackal.
Gennet.	Mongoosees.
Hare.	Otter.
Honey-Badger.	Porcupine.

The Python mentioned on the map has a red throat marking, lives in trees, and lives on monkey, but is said to fall on passing humans so that where the snake is known to be, Africans will avoid the belt of forest. This python is unrecorded. There are no poisonous snakes on the farm or forest area.

Dimbilil. Kipsigis/Dorobo for "The still shaded waters."
Boma. A stockaded cattle enclosure.